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ABSTRACT

Module Two of the Alberta project "Stay In--You Win" is presented in this document. The stated objectives of this module are: to provide the facts of dropping out; to examine the educational, social, and economic consequences of dropping out; to explore the reasons why early school leavers decide to drop out and to provide a profile of the dropout; and to provide effective strategies for dropout prevention based on identification of potential dropouts. These topics related to dropouts are covered: (1) characteristics of dropouts; (2) reasons for dropping out; (3) relationship of receiving social assistance and being a dropout; (4) education and crime; (5) earnings of different educational groups; (6) population trends; (7) differences in dropping out for various subgroups; (8) the Alberta workforce to the year 2000; (9) identifying the potential dropout; (10) public policy; (11) mentoring; (12) peer group tutoring; (13) counseling; (14) community partnerships; (15) parent partnerships; (16) technology; and (17) dropouts returning to school. (ABL)

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STAY IN — YOU WIN

MODULE TWO

DROPOUTS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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STAY IN — YOU WIN

MODULE TWO

DROPOUTS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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MODULE TWO
DROPOUTS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

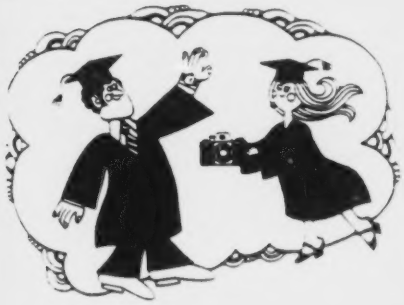
1
INTRODUCTION

Sunday SUN
DROPOUT DISASTER
Nobody has a grip on why nearly one-third of teens quit school
Alberta teens turn their backs on education
WASTE 'STAGGERING'
'Staggering' waste linked to dropouts
City's jobless rate balloons
DROPOUT DILEMMA
Having a say on dropping out
Nobody has a grip on why nearly one-third of teens quit school

Dropout prevention is one of the key agenda items for the future. One can scarcely open a newspaper or an educational journal these days without dropouts being raised as a critical issue of social and educational concern.

First the facts. As always there is "good" news and "bad" news. The good news is that about 70% of Alberta high school students complete their three-year course of studies and obtain a diploma. The bad news is that 30% do not. Moreover, there is continuing public concern about the ability of high school graduates to function proficiently in areas such as literacy and numeracy. Never mind that universities are raising their entrance standards and examining students more carefully in the basic competencies; as many as half those who do graduate take four years to complete grades 10, 11 and 12. For a total investment of $5,400 per student per year in 1991 there is likely to be a continuing concern with the problem of high school dropouts. The problem has many faces: the rising concern over academic standards which many students cannot meet, the increasing trend to many students having to work to support themselves, alienation of youth from society — including schooling — and a host of other challenges that we as educators and students face.

All too often students demand immediate gratification instead of focussing on the long term. Marshall McLuhan captured this in his axiom, "In education we are often too busy doing the immediate to do the important." He also asked whether we would want to buy a car from a company with a 30% failure rate. The problem with this industrial comparison is obvious: We as educators operate in a context which calls for shared responsibility by the student, the parent and ourselves. This is very much the spirit of this STAY IN—YOU WIN package. The emphasis is on the responsibility of the learner, the parent and the teacher. We need not feel lonely in our attempts to reduce the dropout rate through an improved understanding of the causes and solutions to this critical problem. Other countries in the industrialized world have comparable and



even worse problems. Fortunately the literature indicates a number of positive alternatives and many of these are itemized in Module Four.

The federal department of Employment & Immigration estimates in its publication, A National Stay-In-School Initiative (1990) that 100,000 Canadian high school students drop out every year. This is one dropout for every 45 seconds of the school day. In the decade of the '90s this is projected to lead to more than one million youth "seeking to enter a labor market that increasingly views them as functionally illiterate, largely untrainable and mostly unemployable." Present estimates are that $4 billion is lost each year in Canada through errors and lost productivity. Woods Gordon calculates the total costs of illiteracy at $10 billion per year. This stark reality can lead to a "lost generation" similar to the economic situation in the United Kingdom today where one in four youth aged 19 to 24 is unemployed and likely to remain so in a future that increasingly calls for more years of education.

This module explores the circumstances surrounding dropouts and develops a plan for encouraging students to stay in school. The task of keeping students in school is important and it is urgent. The long term economic health of Canada, the quality of life for Albertans and the best possible education for all Alberta students are largely dependent upon the efforts that we put into STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives. The task is formidable because current assessments are that one-third of all workers cannot read well enough to do their jobs effectively.

2 OBJECTIVES

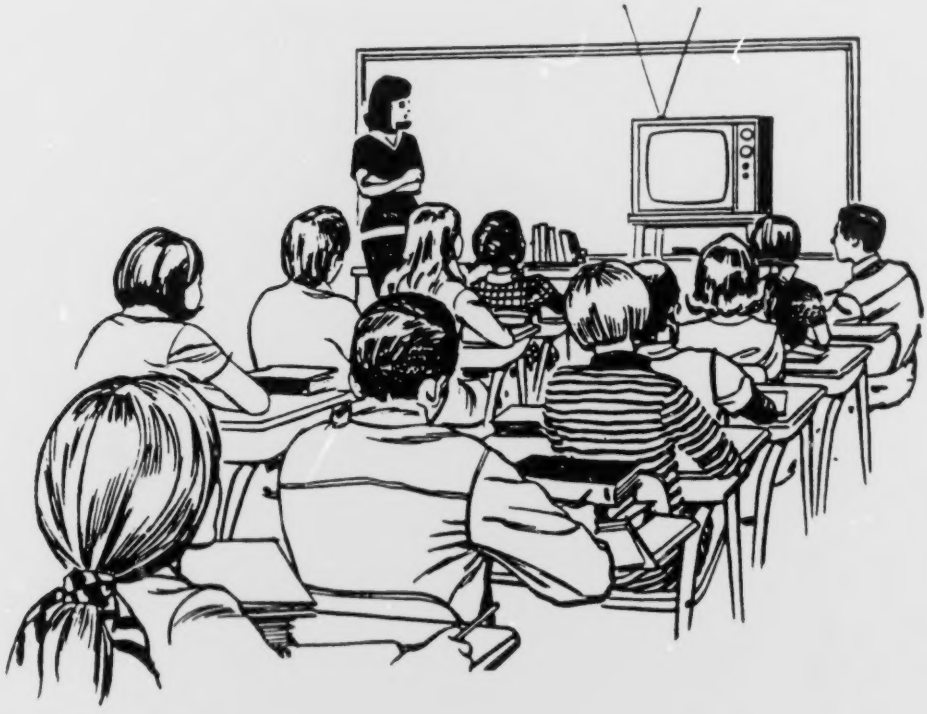
The objectives for this module, "Dropouts: Problems and Solutions," are:

- **To provide the facts on dropping out.**
- **To examine the educational, social and economic consequences of dropping out.**
- **To explore the reasons why early school leavers decide to drop out and provide a profile of the dropout.**
- **To provide effective strategies for dropout prevention based on identification of potential dropouts**

The information presented is designed to provide up-to-date results from the research literature so that this information can be more widely understood by educators, students and parents. Improved understanding of the dropout phenomenon in your community is an important part of this process.

3 THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

Canadian figures show that in the 1950s only 30% of youth graduated with a high school diploma; by those standards we have come a long way in the provision of equitable educational opportunity where the latest statistics indicate that 70% of youth now obtain their diploma. The ways in which dropout rates are calculated vary and the standards for a high school diploma also vary across Canada. However, it should be noted that federal government forecasts indicate a continuing rise in the Alberta dropout rate unless effective intervention takes place.

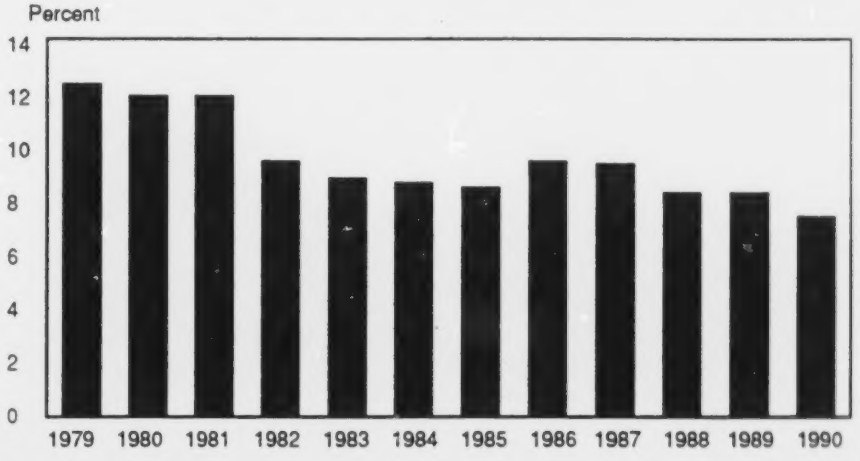


STAY IN — YOU WIN

Alberta Education has tracked the early school leaver rates for the period since 1979 and the chart below shows a small decline in the rate over the past three years. However, the present rates indicate that about 50 Alberta students drop out every school day and this still constitutes a significant waste of human potential.

overhead 2.1

Early School Leaver Rates
Alberta (Students age 14 - 18)



Annual Early School Leaver rates and estimated numbers of dropouts in recent years in Alberta were as follows:

overhead 2.2

Year	Rate	Estimated number of Dropouts
1978-79	12.4%	17,300
1979-80	12.0%	16,500
1980-81	12.0%	16,150
1981-82	9.5%	12,500
1982-83	8.9%	11,800
1983-84	8.8%	11,750
1984-85	8.7%	11,700
1985-86	9.5%	12,900
1986-87	9.4%	12,350
1987-88	8.3%	11,100
1988-89	8.3%	11,000
1989-90	7.5%	10,000

On a longitudinal basis, it is estimated that approximately 32% of Alberta students entering grade 9 leave prior to the usual completion of grade 12 (approximately 8% per year). While early school leaver data are not available by zone, a 1985 study by the Northern Alberta Development Council indicated that the proportion of the population in northern Alberta with less than a grade 9 education was 17.4%; the comparable rate for all of Alberta was 10.8%. Again, statistical averages can conceal wide variations.

Canadian dropout rates are five times higher than Japan, three times as high as West Germany, and notably higher than the United States.

Who drops out?

A Choice Of Futures, a 1987 report by The Canadian Council on Children and Youth and six other national organizations, found that the proportion of children not in school is twice as high for children from low-income families as for others. By age 15, the report adds, twice as many of these children as others have fallen behind in educational achievement.

Dropout rates are particularly high among native youth (as high as 70% in some areas), among youth in remote and rural districts, and among members of some visible minorities.

The dropout population is not homogeneous, however. Dropouts come from all neighborhoods, all backgrounds and all races. In general, those who experience difficulty in reading, and are one or more years behind their peers, are most at risk. Part-time work above a certain threshold — about 15 hours a week — seems to contribute to the decision to quit school.

The dollars and "sense" of investing in people is too important to rely on big governments, big business, or big unions to manage such investment. Centralized or "corporate" solutions are not the answer. All employers and employees, in partnership with the education community and government, have to be at the forefront of the action.

— Focus 2000: The Report of the Task Force on Education and Training. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, August 1989.

Why do they drop out?

To hear the dropouts tell it, in survey after survey, they left because of boredom, because they wanted to work, because they wanted their own money, or because they felt school had become irrelevant to their goals, or their grades were too low, or they had responsibilities at home.

Some of those who have studied the situation closely believe that many dropouts occur for reasons unrelated to school itself — reasons such as negative or indifferent parental attitude, low family income, drug and alcohol abuse, cultural background, and so on. The explanation for most dropouts probably lies in some combination of cultural and institutional factors.

Important to the explanation of students dropping out of school is the understanding that leaving is a process occurring over time, rather than a simple decision to stay or go. Although at the end a severance occurs, the "decision" has been made earlier in small and large ways again and again, and the final break is more of an acknowledgment than a turning point.

— Student Retention and Transition in Ontario High Schools, Ontario Ministry of Education, 1988.

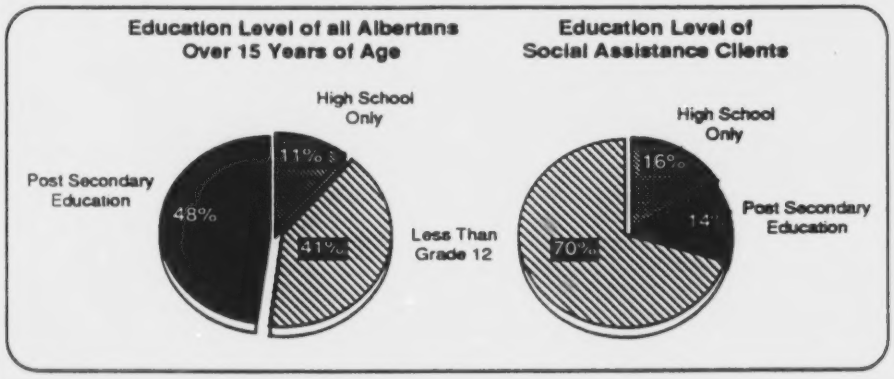
About one-third of dropouts do in fact return to some form of education later in life, often at great personal and economic cost. However, for most dropouts the employment and earning prospects are bleak.

Social Assistance Recipients

Most social assistance recipients have dropped out of high school, and have been poorly prepared by the school system for the labor market. Alberta Education estimates that approximately one third of high school students who enter grade 9 leave prior to the normal completion of grade 12. These are the people who find themselves on social assistance, unable to compete for the highly skilled jobs in today's global economy. In the past, low levels of education did not

preclude people from obtaining steady, reasonably well paid employment. Today's competitive advantage however lies in knowledge-intensive service activity and highly sophisticated and specialized manufacturing activities that require an expert and flexible labor force.

Employers are sometimes forced by competitive pressures to create part-time and casual positions and neglect a commitment to their employees, especially those in low skill occupations that are relatively easy to replace. Many employees in turn may be less reliable and committed, and more demanding and unskilled than employers require. Post secondary education programs are increasingly geared to the needs of academic achievers, and may be unable to fully assist those who face extra difficulty with school.



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Education and Crime

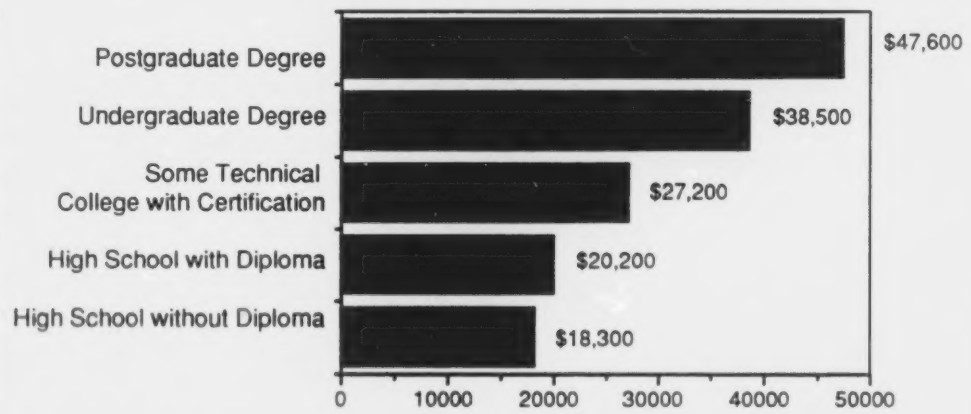
The relationship between education and crime, demonstrated by previous research findings, seems to also be apparent in Alberta. Albertans with lower educational attainments are over-represented among those individuals who are incarcerated. Statistical information obtained from the Alberta Solicitor General, Correctional Services Division substantiates this. The data shows that during the period from April 1987 to March 1988, 16% of all adult offenders admitted to correctional centres in Alberta had less than grade 9 education. The percentage of all Albertans with less than grade 9 education in 1986 was 11%. Slightly more than 55% of all adult offenders for the same year period had only grades 9 - 11.

Earnings of Different Educational Groups

overhead 2.4

There is a strong relationship between the earning power of individuals and their level of formal education. Since the need to earn money is a characteristic of some students who drop out, it is important to establish with students and parents the consequences of failing to obtain an education. Information from the 1985 census was the latest available and an adjustment factor representing the Consumer Price Index was added to update these figures to 1991 levels. Because it is dangerous to imply too much precision in these figures, they have been rounded to the nearest hundred dollars.

Approximate Employment Income by Highest Level of Schooling



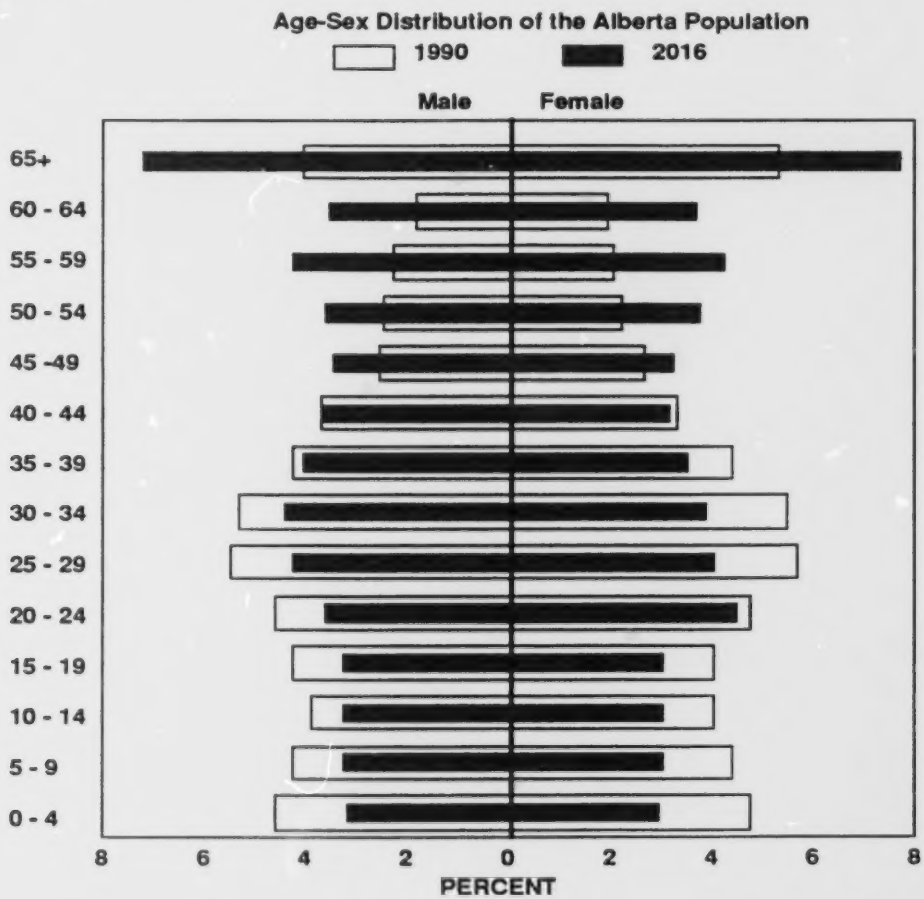
Approximate Employment Income By Highest Level of Schooling (1990)	
High School without Diploma:	$18,300 per year
High School with Diploma:	$20,200 per year
Some Technical College with Certificate:	$27,200 per year
University Degree	$38,500 per year
Postgraduate Degree	$47,600 per year

These figures are an average for all employed in each category and include workers of all ages.

Population Trends

Population projections to the Year 2016 indicate an increase in the age groups over 50 and a shrinking of the number of people who will be in the future workforce. The information presented in the next chapter is important to a full understanding of Alberta's economic future. In this context it is interesting to note that the STAY IN—YOU WIN theme is appropriate to today's teaching force. This is true if only from the single perspective of pensions. In North America generally, in 1955, there were 17 workers for every pensioner. Today there are only 3.5 workers for every pension drawn. By the year 2000 there will be only three workers for every pension drawn (Association of Instructional Technology). Since pensions are largely tax-funded from current contributions and taxes, we all have a vested interest in creating a skilled workforce for the future.

overhead 2.5



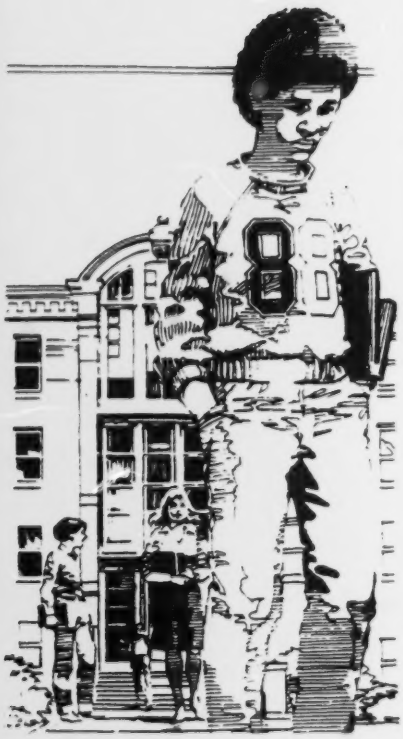
Differences by Sub-groups

Often general or average statistics hide differences in sub-groups. A 1990 study by Statistics Canada surveyed a sample of Canadian youth and reported on significant sub-groups as follows:

- **Immigrant School Leavers**

  Immigrants from a broad spectrum of countries and backgrounds were included in the focus groups. Many immigrant participants said that coming from a different culture had no impact on their dropping out of school. However, most of the immigrant participants said that if they had stayed in their own country they would have finished school. Many of the immigrant youths were alone or were staying with relatives. Their parents and most of their family continued to live in their native country. Furthermore, they felt that they could not fit into Canadian school values. Experts noted that parents who were living in Canada were often working long hours to make a living, and like their children were experiencing cultural conflicts. Experts observed that immigrant parents place too much trust in the school system and do not question recommendations. Schools often perceive this trust as lack of concern.

  While most immigrant participants did not mention language difficulties as a reason for leaving school, only participants who could communicate well in English or French were recruited for the focus groups.



- **Black School Leavers**

  Views on the impact of being a black high school student varied across the country and appeared to be dependent in part on the number of other black students in the school. In Halifax, black school leavers felt that racism had affected their decision to drop out of high school. They complained of feeling segregated socially, being stereotyped as a likely low achiever, a trouble maker, and having few role models of black teachers. However, they emphasized that racial problems and tensions are not limited to the school system, but are present in the community in general.

  In Toronto, several participants had attended schools in which

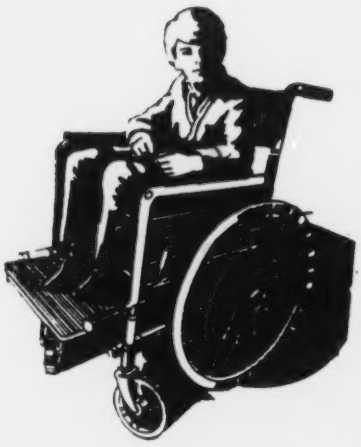
black students and teachers were a majority. School leavers from these schools generally did not feel that being black had affected their decision. Participants who attended schools where blacks were in the minority reported more incidences of prejudice.

Toronto black participants did report more incidents of violence within the school that were associated with racism. Teachers were reported to be afraid to confront the students and were always trying to transfer to another school. Participants mentioned that some students have dropped out because they are afraid of other students in the school.

- **Native School Leavers**

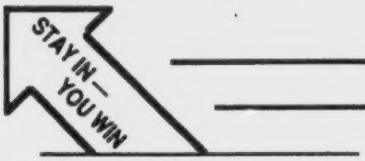
Most native school leavers felt that racism had affected their decision to leave school. Many described being called names by other students, and not fitting into any social group at school. They felt a conflict between their culture and that of the school. Those who had to leave home to attend high school found this a very difficult and lonely experience. Experts interviewed emphasized the problems of native students in rural areas who must leave home to attend high school and saw this as an important cause of school leaving.

- **Physically Disabled Students**



In general, physically disabled youth described a complex system of special programs and educational supports which tracked them through their school years. Dropouts were rare. Nevertheless, physically disabled youth spoke of feeling alienated and having a difficult time in school. The general feeling was that if you could persevere to the higher grades and to university that it would become easier. Participants indicated that social support could be found in the school system. However, in most cases this interpersonal/social support would have to be sought.

Many stated that they were highly motivated to remain in school because of fear that due to their disability they would have no job options at all without an education.



- **Learning Disabled Students**

  Most of the participants indicated that they had difficulty expressing themselves in writing and found the lack of help in the school system frustrating. Many felt that their disability was interpreted as laziness by teachers, who would not allow them additional time to complete tasks. A number of learning disabled participants reported that they were expelled from school for bad behavior. Several reported a need for classes in school on anger control and on communicating with others.

- **Teenage Mothers**

  Most of the teenage mothers who participated in focus groups felt that having a child had motivated them to re-evaluate their lives and to return to school. There was a marked contrast between participants who were involved in special support/ education/training programs and the young mothers who were working to enter such programs. The programs provided a support system which increased the mother's self-confidence and helped them plan their future.

  Surprisingly, participants who became pregnant while in school felt that they had not dropped out of school, but simply were taking a leave of absence to have a baby. Most of these participants fully intended to return once their babies were old enough and child care could be arranged. However, most teenage mothers did not want to return to their previous school to complete their education. They said that as parents they felt older and distant from other high school students.

  A few participants mentioned the inability to get subsidized day care or to get into one of the special programs as reasons for their not being able to go back to school. Yet, in most cases, this was because of the long lineups for these programs.

- **Rural School Leavers**

  Although many of the issues raised by rural youths were similar to other school leaver groups, a few differences were noted. One of the main differences was that more of the participants lived at home. Another difference was that many of these participants left school while still in elementary school. In the

rural areas, transportation was more of an issue in attending school and participating in activities after school. Others complained of a lack of activities in general, which they felt led to more time being spent at parties, and using alcohol and drugs.

Participants also complained of a lack of choice in schools and programs. Few alternate school programs were available in rural areas. While school leavers in urban areas frequently tried a variety of schools or programs before leaving, participants in rural areas rarely reported this. In some cases, to change school would necessitate leaving both the family and the community to live elsewhere.

- **Urban School Leavers**

In contrast to rural school leavers, urban school leavers were likely to be living away from home. Urban school leavers also more frequently described violence in the schools, gangs, and easy access to drugs as factors affecting their decision to leave.

- **Grade Level on Leaving**

Three main differences were noted between school leavers who left school prior to completing grade 10 and school leavers who left after completing grade 10. First, those who left prior to grade 10 tended to be more disadvantaged. Second, they appeared to have more learning problems that were not being addressed by the school. Finally, because they had completed so few credits towards a high school diploma, they seemed more discouraged and more reluctant to return to school since it would take so long to complete their education.

- **Regional Differences**

Few regional differences were observed in the study. This may be a result of the research design since groups held across Canada differed on many factors in addition to location. It should be noted that experts viewed Newfoundland as unique with distinct cultural differences. Receiving social support is socially acceptable and education is not seen as necessary to financial stability. Youth have few positive role models. Few of the Newfoundland participants were working or participating in

training programs. However, many of the participants either planned to return to school or apprentice in a trade. All of the participants live at home and few spoke of drug or alcohol related problems. In Newfoundland, there was some tendency for parents and children to collaborate in the process of dropping out. In some cases, parents functioned to encourage the child to leave school. In other cases, parents facilitated a return to school.

Summary

This chapter has documented the dimensions of the dropout problem. About one third of Alberta students do not complete their high school diploma. The research generally shows that approximately one third of dropouts are female and that dropouts seldom discuss their decision to drop out with peers, parents or teachers. The costs may be calculated in human educational and economic terms:

overhead 2.6

Costs of Dropping Out

Human costs

- **Lack of ability to reach full potential as an individual.**
- **Increased possibility of social alienation, addiction, problems with the law, and poverty.**
- **Inability to participate in the desired quality of life.**

Educational costs

- **Failure to develop life-coping skills adequate to the challenges of the future.**
- **Lack of effective knowledge, skills and attitudes for personal growth.**
- **Lack of ability to learn and train for employment opportunities.**

Economic costs to society

- **Increased provision of social services such as maintenance, unemployment, family support, corrections and health care benefits.**
- **Reduction in economic competitiveness, employment incomes and revenues.**
- **Waste of social investments made in education and training.**

Information on the social costs of dropping out is difficult to find; however, the following indications in the research literature suggest the broad nature of the problem and demonstrate that "we are all in this together."

- In British Columbia, 34% of the age group 15-24 who have dropped out of high school are unemployed and drawing welfare payments of $400 per month. In 1987, British Columbia reported that 3,000 youth of school age were not attending school, did not have a job and were drawing unemployment insurance benefits in excess of $1,000,000 per month.

- Corrections Canada's 1985 estimates were that more than two-thirds of the 29,000 inmates of federal and provincial institutions had less than grade 9 education. The federal cost then was $39,600 per year per inmate. Additionally, probation, parole, and supervision services for those not incarcerated cost Canadians $1.4 billion per year. It is interesting to note that this total was more than the total of Alberta's provincial funding of the School Foundation Program for all school grants.

- In the United States, the Bureau of Census estimates that lifetime earnings of all high school male graduates are $260,000 greater than for male dropouts.

- A 1990 study by Robert Gholson of IBM (USA) has developed the Colorado Economic Impact Model that assesses dropout rates, welfare, prison, remedial education, adult literacy and training costs. For a hypothetical State with a student population of 500,000 the costs amount to $500 per student per year. Gholson reports that the total of $11 billion for the whole of the United States, combined with the $25 billion per year that business and industry spends on basic skills training yields a total of $36 billion per year that is being spent "to compensate for inadequacies in our educational system."

- The United States Congressional Committee for Economic Development has calculated that: "Every $1.00 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.74 in the costs of remedial education, welfare and crime further down the road." The cost of remedial education programs is six times as high for on-the-job training as for in-school programs.

- James Catterall of Stanford University estimated the 1985 costs of dropouts in the Los Angeles School District area as follows:

  $125 million annually for police services
  $225 million annually in judicial and penal services
  $ 8 million annually in employment services
  $ 40 million in welfare services
  $ 90 million in health services
  Total: $488 million per year

- The Canadian government estimates the costs of dropouts to society at $33 billion over the next 20 years.

Clearly all these figures need to be interpreted with caution and the concern here is only to show that there are substantial and real costs to dropping out and that we all inherit a portion of these costs through taxation systems.

Of greater significance are the human costs to individuals and families. One of the predictors for a student dropping out is that one or more parents dropped out. Social scientists point out that there is a tendency generally for social difficulties to persist from one generation to the next in a downward spiral that is increasingly difficult to escape.

The twentieth century is the century when universal public education was established as a strand in the social fabric of the western world. As we compete more vigorously in the industrialized world, the problem of dropouts becomes more significant, and finding solutions more urgent.

4. THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

Education has multiple goals, only one of which is the preparation of students for the world of work. However, the critical role of education and training, now and into the future, has a special place when considering dropout prevention. It is important that students, parents and teachers have an effective understanding of trends in the workplace of the future. This chapter incorporates the publication The Alberta Workforce to the Year 2000 from Alberta Career Development and Employment. It is included with grateful acknowledgment.

Skill demands are rising in step with Canadian industry's accelerating shift to new technologies — micro-electronics, telecommunications, new materials — and in the drive for international competitiveness now and in the future.

Market demands, together with competitive pressures and technological change, are shifting the mix of occupations. Fewer jobs are available to those with lower levels of education and training, and there will be fewer still as the decade unfolds.

The demand for highly skilled workers, meanwhile, is rising dramatically. It is estimated that during the 1990s almost two-thirds of all new jobs will require more than 12 years of education and training. Many of the new jobs will demand more than 17 years of education and training. That environment will stifle most dropouts. Some do return to school or enter training programs. But many others, lacking the basics, will be untrainable in the workplace. They will be trapped in cycles of unstable work and dependency, a situation that will perpetuate low self-esteem, and one that invites increasing problems with illiteracy, innumeracy and poverty.

Unchecked, the current dropout rate implies an unacceptable loss of human potential, higher social costs, and a serious deficit in the supply of skills needed to expand employment, productivity and incomes for all Canadians.

Collective action is necessary, now, by governments, educators, the business and academic communities, labor, social agencies, parents and youth.

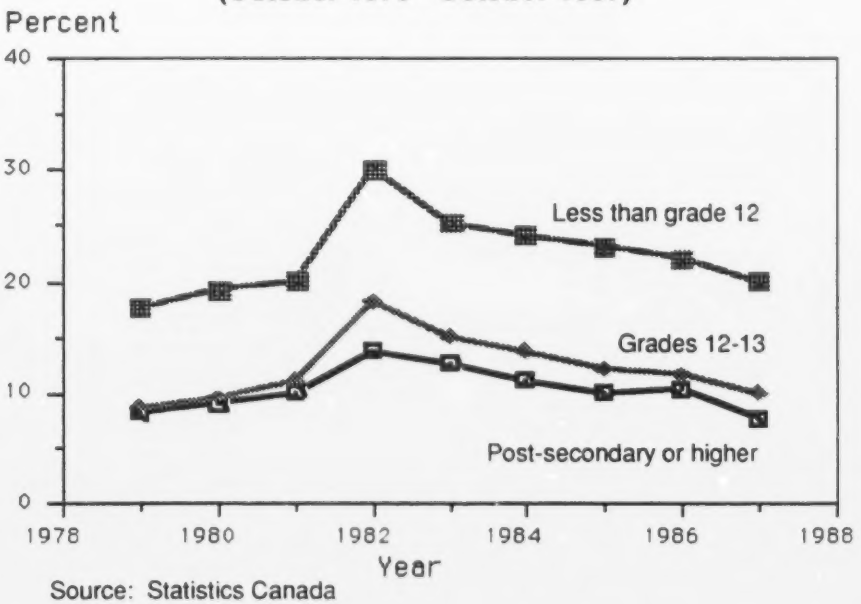
The 1990s will be no more predictable than the 1980s. they will demand an educated workforce that is internationalized and that has a broader disciplinary foundation than required in the past. But the basic skills and qualities educators seek to impart will be the same — the capacity for critical thinking and the ability to communicate effectively. When these fundamentals are matched with the capacity for flexibility and innovation, Canada need not fear a world of accelerating change and increasingly competitive markets.

"Education for Trading into the 1990s," William G. Saywell, President, Simon Fraser University.

Unemployment is far higher in the "less than grade 12" category than for those who do graduate or obtain some post-secondary education. The graph below illustrates this difference.

overhead 2.7

Unemployment Rate of Out-of-School Youth
(October 1979 - October 1987)



Source: Statistics Canada

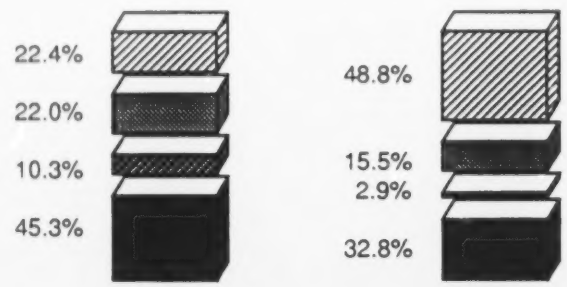
If things seem bleak for today's dropout, future forecasts predict that skill requirements are rising and that tomorrow's dropout will be in desperate circumstances.

In the past, our advantage in world markets has been based on a rich supply of natural resources. Canada's competitiveness now depends less on these natural advantages, and more on the skill we bring to our work. The skills to use technology to create higher value-added products or to find better ways of performing tasks are the keys to future prosperity.

—Success in the Works: A Policy Paper, Employment and Immigration Canada, April 1989.

overhead 2.8

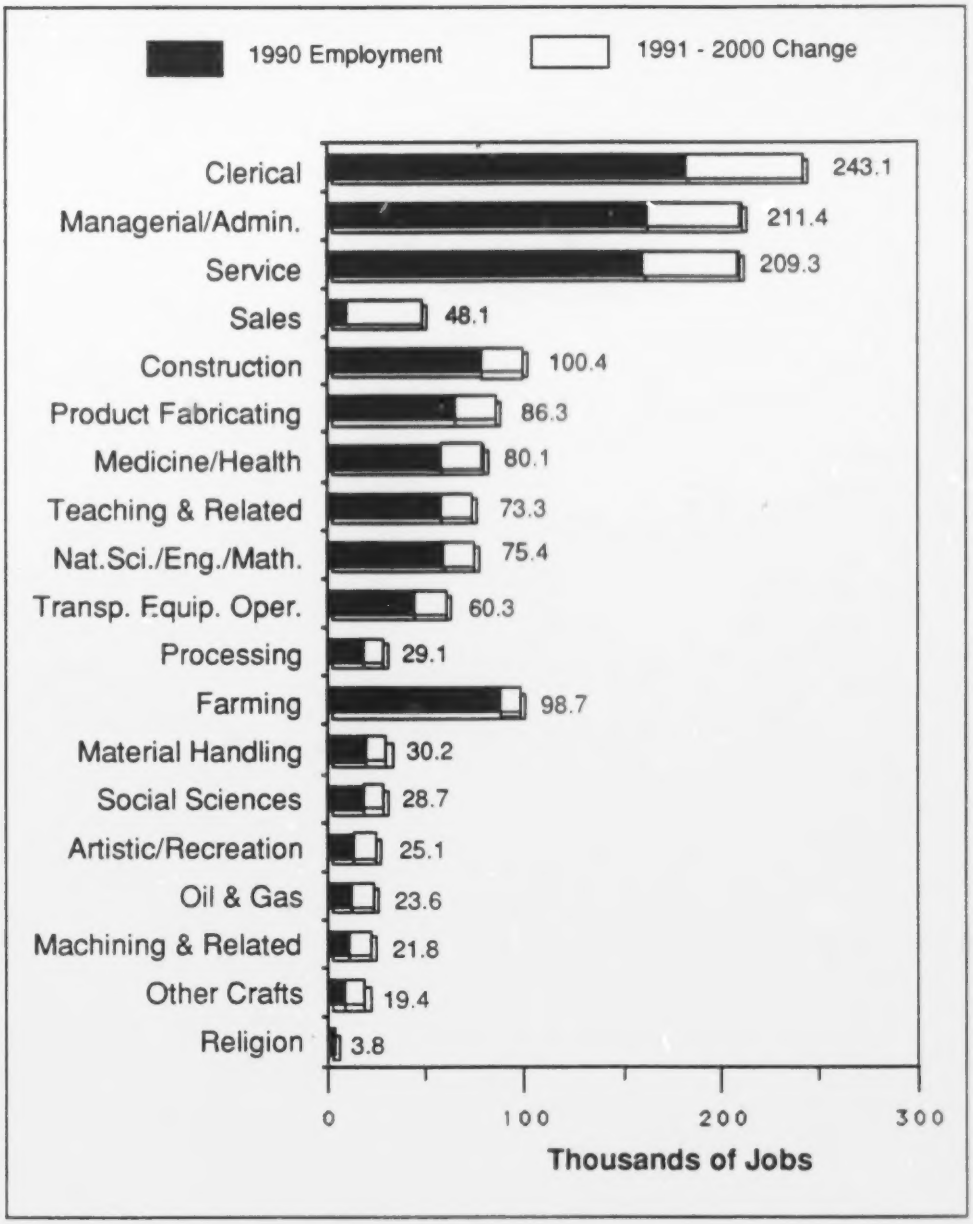
Rising Skill Requirements
(EIC, 1989)



A 1991 study, The Labour Market of the 90s: Employment and Occupational Trends, by Alberta Career Development & Employment analyses the employment growth rate from 1990 to the year 2000 and lists some significant shifts in the job requirements for the future. It concludes that 62% of all new jobs will require some form of post-secondary education and lists the occupational employment trends for 1990 with the anticipated additional jobs to the year 2000. The chart overleaf illustrates these trends.

overhead 2.9

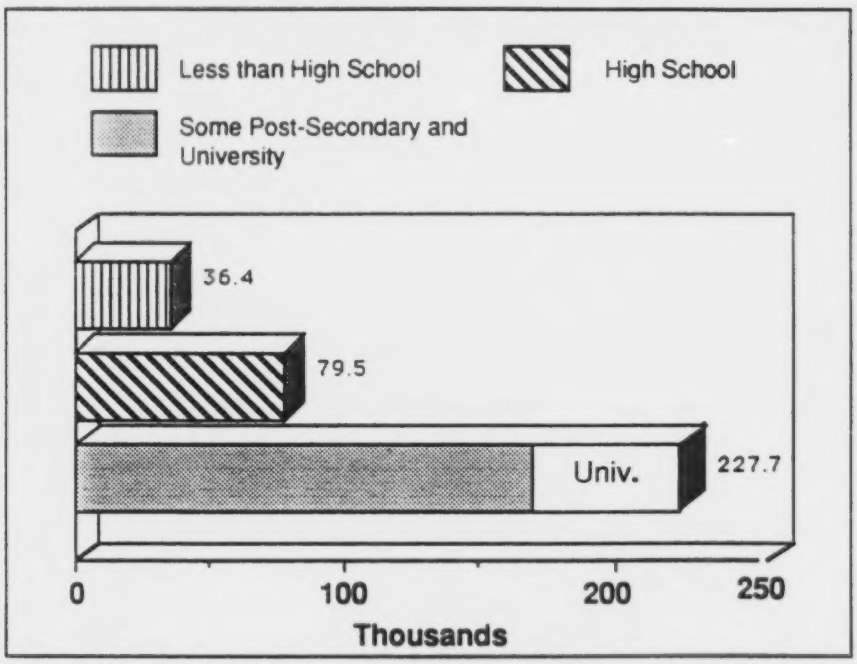
Employment Growth by Occupational Group
Alberta, 1990 - 2000



The rising level of skills required in the decade ahead is also projected below and illustrates that the smallest number of jobs available will be in the category of "less than high school."

overhead 2.10

Projected Employment Change by Skill Level, Alberta, 1990 - 2000



(Note: "Some Post-secondary" includes short courses of a year or sometimes less. "Univ." is 57.3 thousand of post secondary total.)

SUMMARY

We can all think of examples of students who have dropped out and created effective careers for themselves. Both Einstein and Churchill were failures at school. However, it is becoming more difficult to escape from the consequences of dropping out. In the past, there were alternative routes to education — both formal and informal. In the future, these routes will become more difficult to travel as the requirements of the workplace become more sophisticated and more technologically demanding. For example, one of the major fast-food chains is already planning automation of its restaurants. The consequence will be a decline in the jobs now available for the

under-educated yet ambitious. Seventy percent of the jobs in the future will require two years of education beyond high school graduation and of those about one-third will require four years of post-secondary education.

The "half-life" for knowledge in the engineering field is now rated as 3.2 years for specialized knowledge and reinforces the increasing need for lifelong education. The robots that are playing an increasing role in industry not only reduce the number of low-skilled jobs, they also force a smaller but more highly skilled workforce of specialists to operate, maintain and repair them. The reading level of automotive service manuals now exceeds the capability of many mechanics trained and hired in earlier times.

In this the last decade of the twentieth century we have to consider the need for a smooth transition to the kind of workplace that will emerge in the twenty-first century. The graduating class of the Year 2000 is already in grade 3 or 4. The task is important and the task is urgent.

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THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

Alberta

CAREER DEVELOPMENT
AND EMPLOYMENT

THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

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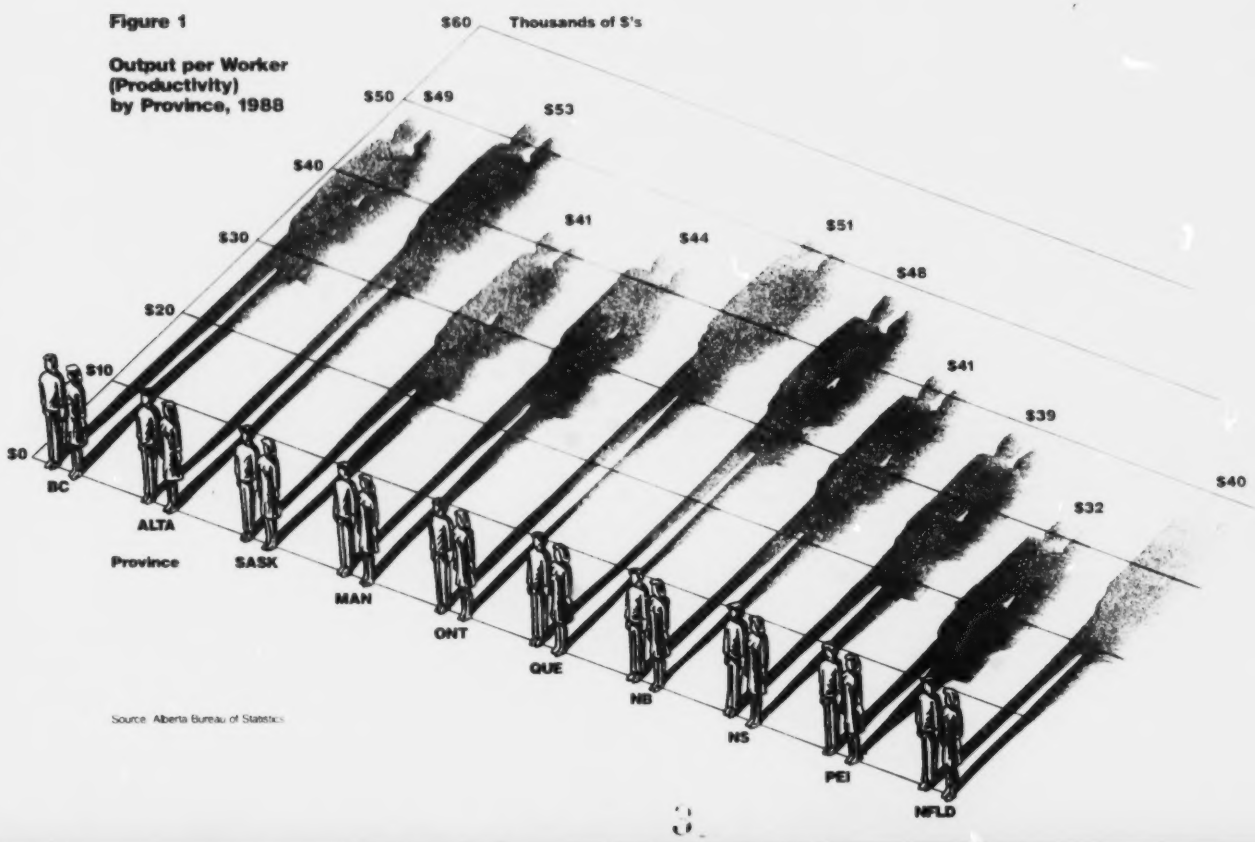
THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

INTRODUCTION

Statistics indicate that the Alberta workforce is among the most productive, (See Figure 1) well-educated, (Figure 2) highly-skilled, literate and youthful (Figure 3) in Canada. Compared to the rest of Canada, Alberta has the highest proportion of its working age population employed. However, the nature of the labour market is constantly changing in response to economic and social conditions and the personal goals of individuals. As a result, mismatches between workplace demands and workforce capabilities can emerge quickly, leading to increased unemployment for individuals and reduced productivity for business.

Figure 1

Output per Worker (Productivity) by Province, 1988



Source: Alberta Bureau of Statistics

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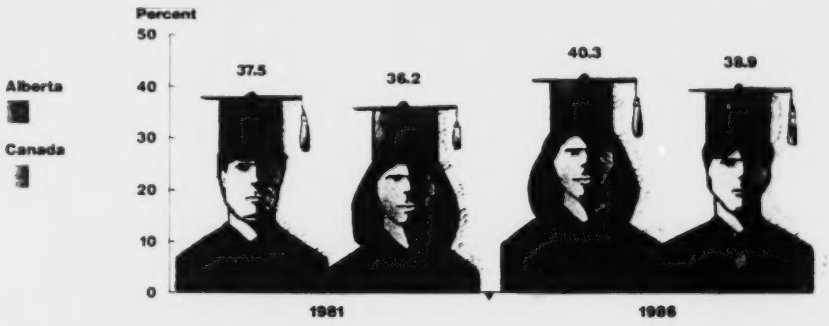
The dynamic nature of the labour market can be illustrated by 1987 data on the flow of individuals into, out of and within the labour force. Of the approximately 1,475,000 people in the Alberta labour market during that year, 548,000 (39 percent) underwent some form of labour market transition due to promotion, layoff, retirement, job change or withdrawal from the workforce to care for children or undergo training. Others entered the labour market for the first time or after a prolonged absence. This large degree of change is typical of the labour market and not the result of unusual circumstances.

Figure 2

Proportion of Labour Force with Post Secondary Education, Alberta & Canada, 1981 & 1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 81/86 Census

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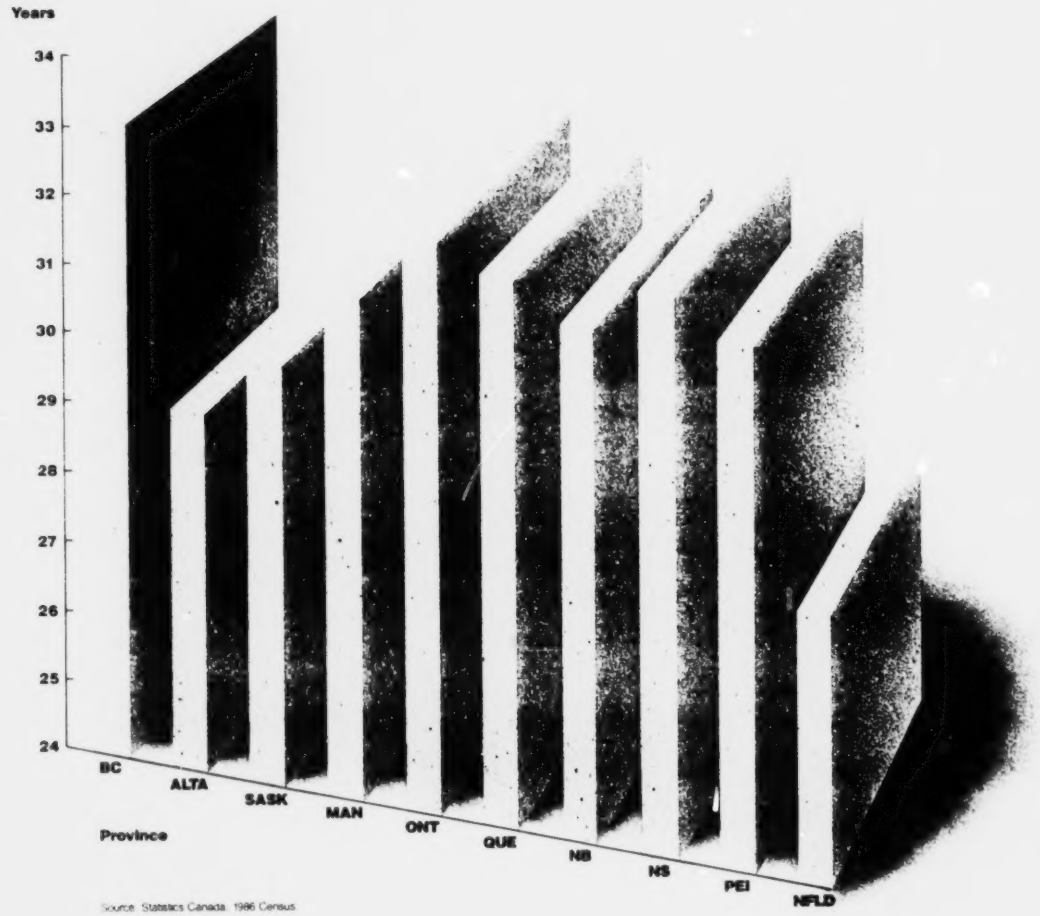
As significant as it already is, the degree of labour market change may intensify over the next decade as new technologies and growing international competition continue to force existing industries to restructure or seek new opportunities. Demographic shifts are also expected to alter substantially the nature of the workforce. To remain competitive, companies and individuals are already finding they must continually adapt and seek new opportunities. As the economic and social changes of the 1990s unfold, individual career planning and corporate human resource management may become more important than ever before. Governments, which have traditionally developed policies and programs to assist individuals adversely affected by labour market upheaval, will face new challenges. Clearly, all Albertans will have to work together as partners to meet these challenges.

This paper summarizes major trends expected to affect the labour market in the 1990s and examines their public policy implications. Its purpose is to serve as a discussion document that reflects the commitment of the Government of Alberta to assist in the development of a high caliber workforce.

Figure 3

Median Age of Population by Province, 1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 Census

THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

THE MAJOR TRENDS THAT WILL AFFECT THE LABOUR MARKET IN THE 1990s

The descriptions that follow are the major trends expected to affect the Alberta labour market during the next 10 to 12 years.

A. The Global Market Place

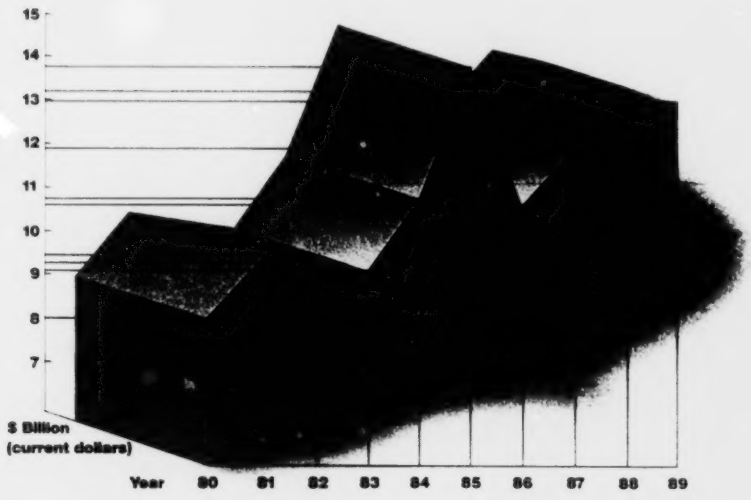
Competition within international trading markets is increasing considerably. Strongly encouraged by the provincial government, Alberta companies have already developed new international markets for many of their products and services. The continued ability of the Alberta private sector to compete abroad requires a workforce equipped with the skills and flexibility to adapt quickly to changing consumer demand. (Figure 4)

B. Cyclical and Seasonal Shifts

Though responsible for much of the province's wealth, Alberta's resource industries are subject to cyclical and seasonal downturns. Despite optimistic forecasts for resource-based industries in the 1990s, Alberta's resource sector and workforce will continue to be affected by changes in the world marketplace.

Figure 4

Alberta's International Export Levels, 1980 - 1989



Source: Statistics Canada

THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

C. From Oil to Computer Chips

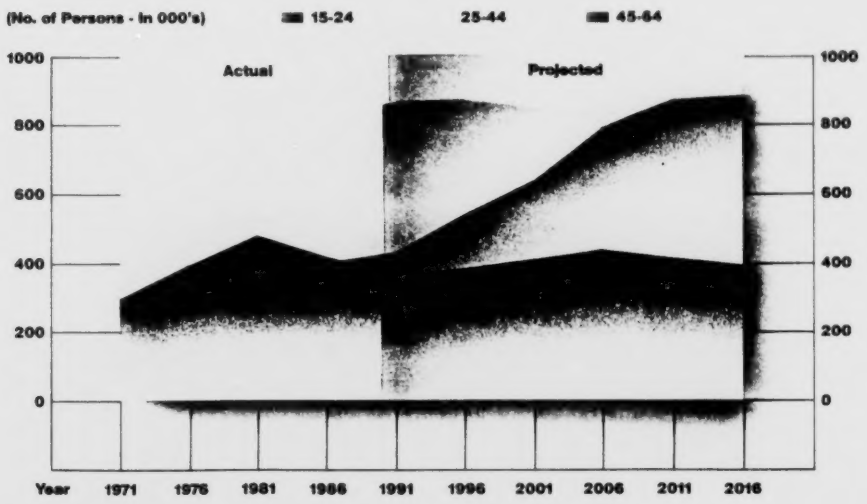
Alberta is moving from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. This shift is accompanied by rapid technological change, the growth of employment opportunities in the service-producing sector, and the impact of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Small business will continue to be the primary source of job generation. As the pace of diversification increases, particularly in the advanced technologies, this knowledge-based economy will require new, innovative skills from its labour force.

D. The Maturing Alberta Population

The average age of the Alberta population is rising. The size of the 15-to-24 age group is declining while the number of Albertans aged 45 years and older is increasing. (Figure 5) A falling birth rate and decreased in-migration from other provinces have caused this demographic shift. Meanwhile, immigrants and natives continue to experience higher than average birth rates, thus forming a larger proportion of the youth population than in the past. As a result, the job seekers of the 1990s will come from different age and ethnic groups than those of the 1980s.

Figure 5

Population by Selected Age Groups Alberta, 1971 - 2016



Source: Alberta Bureau of Statistics & Statistics Canada, March 1990.

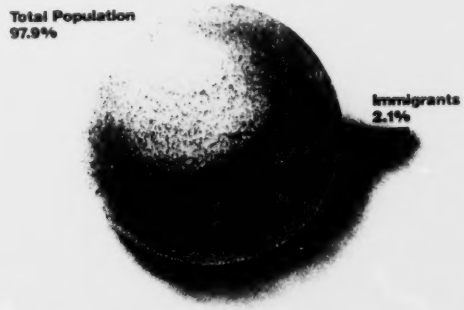
THE ALBERTA WORKFORCE TO THE YEAR 2000

E. Changing Immigration Sources

The province will begin to rely more heavily on immigrants to meet its labour market needs. The majority of Alberta's recent immigrants have come from the non-European nations, consequently, there will be an increased demand for services for immigrants in basic skill training and English-as-a-Second-Language training (Figure 6 and 7).

Figure 6

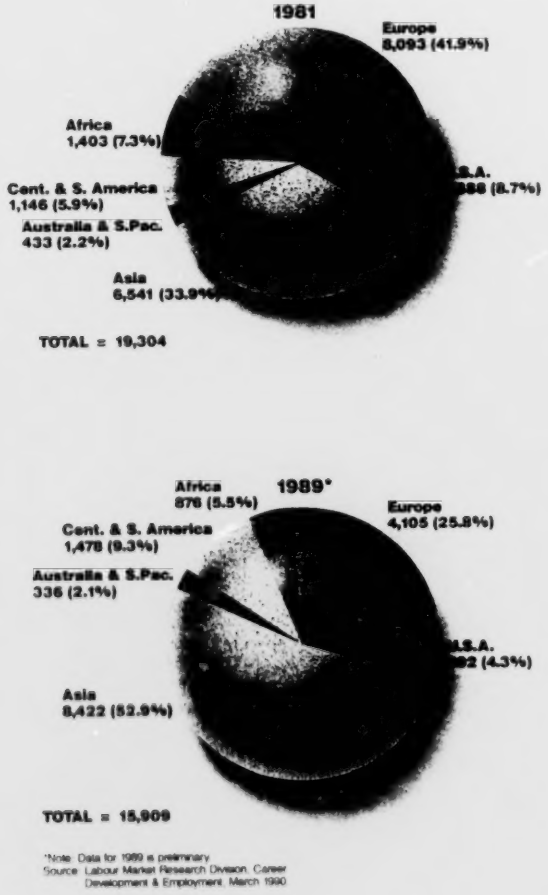
Recent Immigrants as a Proportion of Alberta's Total Population*



*Note: Refers to the 1986-89 period.
Source: Labour Market Research Division, Career Development & Employment, March 1990

Figure 7

Sources of Immigration Alberta, 1981 and 1989*



*Note: Data for 1989 is preliminary.
Source: Labour Market Research Division, Career Development & Employment, March 1990

F. Fairness in the Workplace

Growing concern about fairness in the workplace is being raised by a variety of special interest groups. Fairness in the workplace encompasses such issues as equal access to training, employment and advancement opportunities, as well as fairness in compensation and benefits. These concerns are important, not only from a social justice perspective, but also from a labour market perspective. Many groups not participating fully in the labour market today, such as natives, women, persons with disabilities and immigrants, will become an increasingly valuable source of labour in the 1990s. Although no agreement exists as to the most appropriate response to these issues, they will present a major challenge to society over the next decade.

G. Concern for the Environment

Throughout the world people are becoming more concerned about the impact of industrial development on the environment and demanding more government scrutiny.

Large resource projects in Alberta will be subject to greater scrutiny by an environmentally aware public and government. On the one hand, this may slow down resource development and related job creation. On the other hand, Alberta companies are in a good position to develop and export technologies which protect the environment. The growth of such an environmental protection industry would create new jobs for workers in a variety of disciplines, including science, business and international marketing.

POLICY CHALLENGES

The changing nature of the labour market raises several significant public policy issues.

A. Increasing Alberta Industry's Ability to Compete

To succeed, industries will need to anticipate and respond to new market demands on a global rather than a provincial or national basis. Leadership, innovation, and effective marketing will be essential for the long-term success and competitiveness of Alberta's industries. This will undoubtedly require employers and workers to acquire new skills and an increased awareness of global economic trends.

B. Maximizing Workforce Productivity and Potential

As technological change and growing global competition cause a restructuring of the economy, governments will be called upon increasingly to assist industry in the development and maintenance of an appropriately skilled workforce.

Skilled workers are essential to a healthy economy. Traditionally, governments have played a fundamental role in the development of workers through the educational system and through support for employer-based training. The Alberta government is now in a position to ask several important questions. Are the present methods and mix of institutional and industrial training programs appropriate? Do the current systems have the ability to respond quickly and adequately to new skill requirements?

Another essential ingredient in economic growth is the full utilization of available labour. As the population ages and its composition changes, traditional labour sources are expected to decline. Thus less readily available potential workers, the jobless and the underemployed, will require assistance through education and skill training to become full participants in the labour market.

C. Labour Market Adjustment

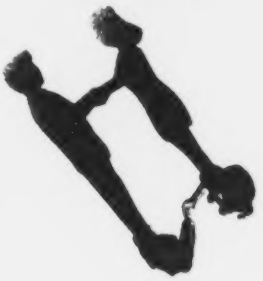
As economic restructuring continues and labour market imbalances occur, labour market adjustments such as immigration and retraining activities will be affected. While the precise nature of these adjustments is difficult to predict, the need for innovative responses by the private sector, individuals and government is anticipated.

Although less than full participation of individuals in the workforce has always been of concern, it is anticipated that measures to increase participation over the next decade should be given more consideration.

D. Efficient and Effective Utilization of Government Funds

The federal and provincial governments separately establish and implement their own labour market policies and programs. While there are several examples of federal-provincial agreements and other efforts to coordinate activities in this province, there are overlaps and gaps in programming as well as considerable differences in priorities. Improving the linkages between federal and provincial strategies to avoid program and administrative duplication is an important area of public policy. Further improvements would contribute to effective and efficient spending of tax dollars.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES



The changing labour market raises substantial public policy issues. To effectively anticipate the workplace challenges of the 1990s, the following responses could be considered.

A. Training

New technologies and global competition increase the demand for greater skill levels and competence on the job. Maintaining a skilled workforce in the face of continual and rapid change and a maturing population is a task that requires the co-operation of government, industry and individuals and a commitment to work together. As the year 2000 approaches, training and retraining will assume a higher priority.

The Government of Alberta is committed to developing, supporting, and maintaining responsive, employer-based training and retraining mechanisms that will support economic development, diversification and restructuring, and which meets recognized standards of accomplishment.

B. Reducing Seasonal and Cyclical Instability

The Alberta Government has acquired considerable experience in responding to periods of rapid economic growth and sudden economic change. Its capacity to act quickly and decisively during cyclical swings in the economy will be enhanced to ensure that valuable labour resources are not lost to the province, that individuals have an opportunity to maintain their skills, and that the economic consequences of short-term layoffs are minimized.

C. Improving Access to the Labour Market

It has become an increasing concern that many youths, persons with disabilities, women, natives, older workers and members of visible minorities are experiencing lengthy periods of unemployment, or are concentrated in low-paying, low-skill occupations. The problem is that many of these individuals lack the skills or work experience required for all but the most basic, entry-level jobs. Yet, as the population ages, Alberta will become increasingly dependent on these individuals to take the place of retiring members of the existing workforce. These individuals will require help overcoming barriers to full workforce participation. The most significant obstacles include:

- lack of experience;
- lack of appropriate education and training;
- lack of information;
- lack of support services; and
- stereotypes concerning the skills and abilities of certain groups.

D. Immigration As A Means of Supporting and Creating Economic Activity

With immigrants forming an ever larger portion of the labour market, Alberta will want to have greater involvement in the immigrant selection process.

Business immigration enhances economic activity and creates jobs in the province. Continued efforts to promote business immigration to Alberta should be viewed as a valuable component of the province's economic development and diversification plans.

To ensure that newcomers are well prepared to become full participants in the economic and social life of Alberta, the review of existing immigration and settlement services will continue.

E. Accurate Labour Market Information

The development, distribution and interpretation of accurate labour market information is vital to the maintenance of an informed, trained and flexible labour force and to the ability of employers, individuals and government agencies to respond correctly to changes in the labour market and economy.

The Alberta Government is aware of the need for an improved understanding of how the labour market works and for up-to-date analysis of labour market trends, not only for its own policy-making purposes, but for the decision-making needs of industry and individuals.

CONCLUSION-LABOUR MARKET POLICY TO THE YEAR 2000

The economic, social and demographic trends identified in this paper will substantially alter the nature of Alberta's labour market. New technologies and increased global competition will generate a continual demand for new, more sophisticated skills and greater worker competence. Continuing growth in the Province's healthy small business sector will add to that demand. Meanwhile, a falling birth rate, aging population, and drop in interprovincial migration will cause Alberta's traditional labour supply to dwindle.

As a result of the above trends, Alberta industries will need to rely more heavily on groups which today face considerable barriers to employment. In order to help maintain its current high level of productivity and competitiveness, Alberta will need to design policies and programs to help these groups — women, natives, immigrants, youth, the disabled — acquire the training, education and English language skills required by the workplace. Additionally, the province will need to seek a greater role in the immigration process, promote industry-based training and re-training, and ensure that accurate labour market information is made available regularly to government, industry and the general public.

The Alberta Government is confident it can meet the labour market challenges of the 1990s. Working in partnership with industry, the Federal Government, and individual Albertans, every effort will be made to enhance the employability and skill level of the workforce with a flexible blend of job creation, training, counselling and information programs. Skilled workers are essential to Alberta's economic health; all Albertans have a stake in building the labour force of tomorrow.

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5. SOLUTIONS

The previous chapters have outlined the major problems and consequences associated with early school leaving and non-completion of a high school diploma. The search for solutions is far from easy but the research literature points to a number of approaches that have worked elsewhere. Module Four of this STAY IN—YOU WIN package contains specific examples of dropout prevention programs that are in place in Canada and the United States and will be helpful in planning your school's STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives. The 87 program examples provided in Module Four illustrate the diversity of approaches which have been developed to deal with the diversity of causes of high school dropout. High school dropouts are not a uniform group — there are examples of high achievers dropping out because of personal circumstance or negative attitudes to school or teachers; and still others who prefer the immediate lure of earning wages to staying in school. The reasons why students drop out are varied and they are complex; the solutions should be varied and carefully planned to minimize the chance of an "at-risk" student dropping out.

Radwanski in his "Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts," which was cited extensively in Module One, concludes —

> **Alienation appears to be a crucial characteristic of dropouts: The dropout is an alienated learner. He feels neglected in a system that is geared toward the brighter student. He feels alienated from his teachers who despite claims to teach all students equally, do in fact stereotype their students. Dropouts feel like the low man on the totem pole. Support does not come from within the educational**

system, nor generally from parents.... There is strikingly clear evidence, in both the Goldfarb and the Decima research done for this study, that a sense of having been rejected or ignored by the education system is a key characteristic of dropouts.

The study highlights the inevitably impersonal and bureaucratic structures of today's large high school as a major difficulty in retaining students. This chapter therefore outlines solutions which enhance interpersonal relations, provide for human and caring contacts on a regular basis and emphasize the importance of partnerships with community, parents and peers. This in no sense diminishes the student's responsibility for learning; it does however recognize that at-risk students need a high ratio of human support. The chapter is organized into the following sections:

A. Identifying the Potential Dropout
B. Public Policy
C. Mentoring
D. Peer Group Tutoring
E. Counselling
F. Community Partnerships
G. Parent Partnerships
H. Technology

There is, of course, no single strategy that acts as a "silver bullet" to cure the dropout problem. The inventory of solutions covered in this Module is intended to outline a range of choices for your STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives.

A. Identifying the Potential Dropout

The first step in developing solutions is to identify who is likely to drop out. One of the most significant Canadian studies is a 1988 report to the Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts: The Drop-out Phenomenon in Ontario Secondary Schools by Ellen Karp of Goldfarb Consultants. This report presents a detailed analysis through interviews with students, parents and teachers. It can be purchased from Publication Sales, OISE, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6, and is recommended for those wishing to study the dropout phenomenon in depth. Its "Highlights and Summary Observations" are reproduced here.

WHO IS THE DROPOUT?

The dropout is...

- **Non-academic**

  If a dropout cannot measure the relevance of a subject, he or she is likely to reject it. Subjects that do not illuminate his immediate world are considered a waste of time.

- **A short-range and not a long-range goal setter**

  More than four in five (84%) dropouts say that they prefer doing things to reading about them. (In fact, the same proportion of graduates feels the same way.) The graduate learner, however, is able to set long-range goals adequately enough that he or she can survive a less-than-ideal learning methodology or less-than-adequate teachers.

- **A frustrated learner**

Three in five (58%) of dropouts say they applied a great deal or some effort to their studies and 41% identify themselves as performing extremely or reasonably well at the elementary or junior high level. They rank themselves highly as knowledgeable (72 on a 100-point scale). They feel they are, therefore, learners. However, a large majority feel that "real learning begins when you leave school," or on the job. Forty-five percent state they have problems in academic areas. Many complain (quantitatively and qualitatively) that it was difficult finding teachers willing to help with academic problems, and that often problems were explained in only one fashion, limiting opportunities for improvement and understanding.

One-third of dropouts state that they have failed mathematics, and one-fifth, English. Four in ten parents state that their child failed in these areas. More than one-third of parents state that their child had difficulty in these areas in elementary school. Overall, therefore, while a dropout is not a weak student, on the whole he has academic problems, problems in key areas, which can set in at an early stage.

- **Less inclined to value education than graduates**

Dropouts rank education less highly than graduates as a desirable goal. For them, education is an abstraction, without proven relevance. They tend to come from families where education and career-related subjects were not discussed or promoted. Dropouts' parents have a lower incidence of college or university attendance than do graduates.

- **Reward-driven**

  The dropout needs constant reassurance that he or she is doing a job properly. This seems to result in part from years spent improperly understanding a subject, or from the inference that he or she was not a capable student.

- **Work-driven**

  Dropouts rank work-related goals highly as aspirations. Work is important, doing meaningful work is important, and doing a job well is important. Notorious latecomers and "skippers" in the classroom claim never to have missed a day at work or arrived a moment late. Financial reward motivates the work ethic in these students, along with a sense of pride in performing a job well. Few indicate they developed a "quitter's mentality" since leaving school.

- **Alienated**

  Dropouts are alienated learners. They feel neglected in a system that is geared towards the brighter student. They feel alienated from teachers, who, despite claims to teach all students equally, in fact do stereotype their students. (In discussion, they attribute this tendency to stereotype to time demands and class size, which makes it difficult to get to know all students.) A dropout does not feel driven to participate in extra-curricular activities, to become part of the life of the school.

  Dropouts consider themselves to be on the low rung of the academic ladder. Support does not come from within the

educational system or generally from parents. Dropouts who rank themselves as fair or poor academically are generally less satisfied with their school experience than are graduates, and more alienated.

- **A general level student**

One in two (49%) in our sample of dropouts began at the general level. The range of subjects they state they like and dislike, as well as those they succeed in, falls out with the same proportion as those mentioned by graduates. However, a larger proportion of dropouts fail subject areas in which they say they are weak, relative to graduates.

- **A concrete, rather than an abstract thinker**

The dropout in general does not think in abstractions, but in terms of the visible and measurable. Confused and alienated by concepts that are overly intellectualized, he or she applies that sense of alienation to the school system in general.

- **Low in self-esteem and self-confidence**

Although dropouts rate themselves moderately high on a scale of self-esteem, other factors indicate otherwise. Slightly more than half (56%) of employers, for example, state that dropouts have less self-confidence than do school graduates. Dropouts, in fact, are well accustomed to covering up, to misrepresenting themselves. Many feel that they were "judged by their appearance rather than their ability" and spent years in school acting out other people's prophecies. A significant number felt shamed when they did not grasp an academic concept and

pretended they understood subject areas that increasingly confused them.

In the qualitative phase, teachers and educators spoke of dropouts' tendency to set unrealistic goals, against which they could only measure up negatively.

- **Loyal**

A dropout tends to be very grateful for any attention, and loyal to the person who has bestowed this attention. A caring teacher, therefore, can be a crucial factor in influencing the dropout's view of the value of education.

WHY STUDENTS LEAVE SCHOOL

In order to understand who dropouts are, one must come to an understanding of the factors that motivate them. A student decides to leave school for a combination of reasons, and the pool of factors from which elements can be combined is large. However, these motivations can be identified and differentiated as major, secondary and minor.

Major Factors

During the qualitative phase of research, several motivators emerged as foremost. These factors were mentioned many times in each group, regardless of gender or region and later confirmed in the executive interview stage and by quantification.

These factors are neither gender-driven nor language-driven, but primarily suggest pedagogical and psychological functions. School,

rather than family, pressures predominate and the role of the workplace is important.

- **The dropout is frustrated academically**

  Typically, the dropout tends to have some difficulty in one or more academic areas. Forty-five percent agree with the statement asserting that they had difficulty with academic subjects. In both the qualitative and quantitative phases, however, these students suggested that they found it difficult finding extra help: that teachers were reluctant to take the time, or that they consistently explained problems in the same fashion. Seventy-six percent stated that many teachers did not have the patience for slow learners.

  When asked why school "is not geared towards someone like yourself," 29% of respondents make reference to teachers "not caring." In the qualitative phase, students indicated that it was hard to find teachers before or after school for extra help, but that if they asked too many questions in class, they were made to feel "stupid."

  Forty-two percent of dropouts feel that the school system is geared most to benefit students with top marks, and least to help the slow learner. Many view themselves as adequate learners, but slow or needy of explication. Many also, in the qualitative phase, indicated that they felt stereotyping or labeling had been leveled against them at a fairly early grade, and that it was very difficult to emerge from the confines of this stereotyping. They felt that the stereotyping resulted from aspects of dress, appearance, behavior, or socio-economic background. Sometimes an academic prejudice against another

family member (a previous student) would handicap a more recent entry.

The fact that one-third of dropouts appear to have had difficulties in the areas of mathematics and/or english, problems that parents and teachers suggest are established at a fairly early grade, implies that for some dropouts, "the basics" are problematic. The implications of such problems can have profound effects throughout dropouts' history, particularly as they learn to "cover up" for shortcomings.

While it can be argued that by and large the potential dropout is not always the ideal student and tends sometimes in hindsight to idealize his or her performance at a school, our findings suggest that a degree of stereotyping is taking place. Teachers, obviously, do not on a latent level admit to such labeling: the vast majority state that in their classrooms all students benefit equally. Yet, as some teachers suggest, given their teaching load and administrative duties, combined with class sizes, labeling of weaker or more disruptive students becomes a necessity. Teachers simply don't have the time that more difficult students require. Hence, while 95% of graduating students agree with the statement "while in school I was encouraged to do well," only 70% of dropouts follow suit.

The potential dropout recognizes his or her academic deficiencies, but is frustrated in his or her attempt to address them. Often he or she has already been labelled "different" and, slipping farther and farther behind academically, feels increasingly unworthy of quality, personalized instruction. His or her sense of alienation from the school system overall increases.

The non-dropout, who is able to set long-range goals and who feels less alienated, can better survive academic frustrations. The potential dropout, however, is often fighting battles on other fronts: social, emotional, financial, psychological, and so forth. When getting an education (which dropouts tend anyway to find somewhat irrelevant or without direct value) becomes a frustration, they leave.

- **Relevancy**

Dropouts generally do not value "education for education's sake." They are not academically inclined, not likely given to abstract philosophizing and generally, although by no means uniformly, come from a family where a classical education is not valued highly.

Dropouts, by nature, like to see the rewards of effort. More than any other student, they want their studies to be relevant. They want school to reflect and explain "real life," rather than what they consider esoterica.

The dropout views the curriculum as removed from real life experience. Seventy-three percent feel too much emphasis is put on the past, rather than the present and future. Many complain that school was boring and that subject choices were limited. (For many dropouts, the lack of prerequisite courses might have made the inventory of courses from which they could choose somewhat limited.) Ninety-one percent agree strongly or somewhat that school should be more job or career oriented, and 52% that subjects they were taught were not useful.

The desire for work orientation should not be interpreted on a literal level: 87% of graduates suggest the same thing. This reflects a larger demand for relevancy, which at its lowest common denominator, translates into a desire for a more personalized education. For dropouts, the work world is the real world. Potential dropouts want the school system to recognize and validate their respective places in that world. While dropouts may complain that the study of history and geography is inconsequential, they also agree that an interesting teacher can bring these subjects to life. Teachers who personalize instruction, who demonstrate the relevance of academic "esoterica" to these students, are exempt from the demand for career or real life orientation. A good teacher can make everything seem relevant.

- **Work versus school**

It is the work experience that usually turns a potential dropout into a dropout. Typically, a dropout will work at a part-time job. Finding the rewards — a paycheck and frequent assessment of his performance as simply right or wrong — greater than the rewards of school, finding "real world relevance" and finding the workplace "inviting" relative to the "disinvitation" of school, the dropout's interest in schooling diminishes to the point that he or she simply disappears.

In spite of high levels of job dissatisfaction among dropouts, there was unanimous agreement in the groups that "working was better than going to school." Fifty-seven percent (but 30% of graduates) of those interviewed quantitatively agree. Eighty-three percent agree that most of what one needs to know is learned on the job. Sixty-seven percent prefer working to

studying. Almost four in five dropouts indicate that their primary reason for leaving school was work related.

Work, for the dropout, means money and hence independence, direct feedback, and tangible and intangible rewards for a job adequately done. The workplace invites, where the schoolroom disinvites.

Secondary Factors

The three major motivators listed above — academic frustration, the desire for relevancy, and the pull of the workplace — do not necessarily turn a student into a potential dropout. Usually, one or more secondary factors are in place, which combine with the larger scenario to push a student out of school. While most dropouts share elements of the larger scenario (the exceptions are stereotypically bored, gifted learners — 17% of our sample at one time in their school career skipped or completed more than one grade in a year — and students who left school for positive reasons, for example, the opportunity to apprentice in a family business), the secondary factors are more diverse.

- **Family background**

  Twenty-nine percent of dropouts interviewed come from single parent (mother only) families, compared with 23% of graduates. Alternatively, 62% of dropouts and 74% of graduates live with both parents. While these findings are not major, they suggest that dropouts have a home environment that by its structure is less able to provide the support a potential dropout needs as a bolster against the negative he or she attaches to the school experience.

- **Value of education in the family**

Generally, dropouts do not come from homes in which education is valued relative to high school graduates. Nineteen percent of dropouts report that they never discussed school work as a family, compared with 9% of graduates. Nineteen percent of graduates' parents completed college or university compared with 7% of dropouts.

As a result, 99% of graduates identify "being well educated" as a goal that is "very" or "somewhat" important, compared with 84% of dropouts.

- **Family problems**

Five percent of dropouts state that the primary reason they left school was because of difficulties at home. A higher proportion (four in ten) say that difficulties at home contributed at least to some extent in their decision to leave.

Those that are forced, because of severe family problems, to leave home must support themselves. They find studying while working and being self-supporting difficult and often leave school out of necessity.

- **Pregnancy**

Eleven percent of female dropouts leave school primarily due to pregnancy.

- **Personal trauma**

Although only 4% of dropouts identify emotional crisis or problems as their main reason for leaving school, when asked directly 46% identify it as "very" or "somewhat" important.

Teachers rank this factor highly (93% state that personal problems are very or somewhat important).

- **"Rebellious nature"**

Only 7% of dropouts identify a rebellious nature, being "kicked out" or wanting to have a good time as main reasons for leaving school. (Graduates in fact state that "partying and having a good time" is more important than do dropouts.) Another 15% of dropouts state they left primarily because they did not like school.

There is presumably a degree of compensation in these responses. (It is easier for a dropout to blame the teacher rather than his or her own performance.) However, in their defense, dropouts put the blame for their defeat more on their own shoulders than that of the system. Dropouts have difficulty establishing a positive identity for themselves within the school context, at an age in which identity is important. Anti-social behavior, partying, smoking can be symptomatic of the identity quest. These "negatives" appear to lessen in importance as job responsibilities increase.

- **Self-esteem**

As has been suggested, in spite of the claim to be moderately

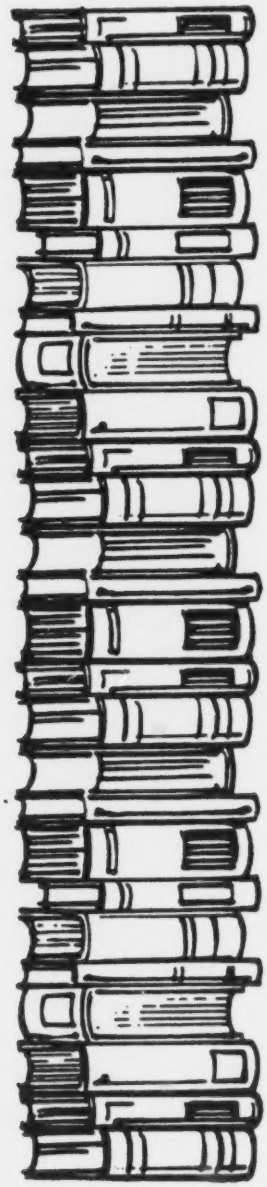
high in self-confidence, there is a certain amount of bravado operating. Face-to-face discussions with these students suggest low self-esteem. The degree to which the students felt, and let themselves feel, neglected and alienated in the system offers other evidence. The quantitative data, taken in concert, also suggests low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Dropouts agree that "people think they are losers": It is only natural that most would internalize this attitude.

- **Ethnic background**

The ethnic dimension of the phenomenon did not emerge strongly in qualitative discussion with dropouts or in the quantitative evaluation, but was an important aspect of discussions with teachers and/or educators. This cultural dimension is still largely a phenomenon important only in Metropolitan Toronto: Educators feel, however, that it will increase in importance outside of urban centers as population pressures increase the number of immigrants settling in other regions.

Plainly stated, the ethnic component has two dimensions. First, many of the students coming from elsewhere do not have the same academic background or the same cultural perspective, as the Ontario-educated student. Academic frustrations therefore can be high and the demands such students make on teachers great (particularly as standardization of instruction/evaluation and a curriculum-driven focus become more important).

Second, although our data indicates the possibility that a slightly larger proportion of graduates have parents born outside



of Canada, educators interested in the education of minority groups have indicated that some cultures do not appear to honor the same kind of learning structure as that upon which our system is based. It is only after two or three generations of residence in the province that assimilated members of these groups begin valuing education along standard Ontario grounds.

A village fisherman, for example, who learned to fish from his own father might not be predisposed to value an abstract, higher ("irrelevant") education for his son. Some families appear to not assign a value to the educating of female offspring, whose eventual role will be restricted to the family sphere. Educators have noted that the cultural orientation of students from certain minority backgrounds does not necessarily orient them towards the pursuit of a university-driven secondary education.

- **Class size**

The complaints voiced by many dropouts about class size and their strong desire for more individual attention is symptomatic of a general cry for a more personalized education: one where their academic existence is validated, where their learning problems can be addressed and where they can feel like the proverbial "somebody."

- **Bright and bored**

There is a small sub-segment of dropouts who are capable academically, but who did not complete their education. (More than ten percent in the sample have skipped a grade in their earlier development.) Often such students are bored at school.

While they are not frustrated academically, many of the other major and secondary contributory factors serve to push them out of school. Their desire for relevance and for student-centered learning is differently motivated but just as strong as that of the academically weak student. Generally, the problems of bright and bored students appear to be related to learning styles, and hence, teaching methodology.

- **Double standards/Labeling**

Many dropouts feel that there is a double standard that applies in classrooms, particularly in disciplinary terms: that the "desirable" kind of student can "get away with murder" while the "undesirable" student is often unjustly accused and that two sets of rules apply to each of the two groups.

A number also mentioned that as suspension or expulsion were frequently used as punishment, they received the underlying message that school was not really important for "the likes of them" anyway.

- **Moving**

One in seven (16%) dropouts indicated that academic difficulties encountered as a result of moving from area to area was a very or somewhat important factor in dropping out.

- **Positive factors**

Some dropouts leave school because they have a constructive, valid alternative (for example, the opportunity to apprentice at a trade of their choice).

Minor Factors

Like emigrating from one country to another, dropping out of school is largely a combination of pushing and pulling factors. Most dropouts feel pushed out of school and pulled into the work world and the outside world. A minority, however, feel not pushed away from school, but pulled faster towards a better illuminated destiny.

Minor factors included the credit system, semestering, first language, gender and haing been in special education classes.

A recent study (Dropout Prevention: Principles & Guidelines, Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1989) found the following reasons for dropping out provided by 2000 early school leavers:

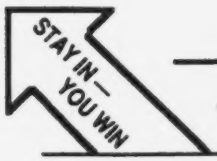
Lack of interest	**45%**
Difficulty with program	**13%**
Employment	**16%**
Pregnancy	**4%***
Other educational institution	**5%**
Health	**2%**
Home help	**2%**
Other	**13%**

*11% of total number of female leavers

A 1988 Ontario study, A Comparative Analysis of Drop-Outs and Non Drop-Outs in Ontario Secondary Schools, by Michael Sullivan of Decima Research (also available from the OISE address provided earlier) cites the following reasons for leaving high school provided by 500 Ontario dropouts.

	Male	Female
School-related		
Lack of interest/dislike/boredom	26%	22%
Problems with teachers	9%	5%
Discipline problems	6%	2%
Courses offered	3%	5%
Poor grades	4%	4%
	48%	38%
Work related	36%	18%
Personal		
Problem at home	8%	15%
Marriage/Pregnancy	1%	14%
Financial problems	2%	3%
Moved	1%	1%
	12%	34%

These two tables on student reasons for dropping out both indicate that dropouts perceive school-related factors to be very significant in their decision to leave school early. This is why dropout prevention programs deal with the entire question of school reform and improvement. Only by planning for a holistic approach which is integrated into the total school program can the problem of dropouts be solved. In order to assist in the identification of potential dropouts a listing of factors which indicate a composite profile of "the dropout" has been compiled by the Florida State Department of Education. The factors are grouped into three categories; school-related, family and personal.



DROPOUT FACTORS

School-related

overhead 2.11

- Absenteeism/Truancy/Frequent tardiness
- Poor grades
- Discrepancy between ability and performance
- Reading level not equal to grade level
- Difficulty learning math skills
- Verbal deficiency
- Inability to tolerate structured activities
- Lack of basic skills
- Lack of definitive educational goals
- Feeling of alienation from school
- Belief that the school doesn't care
- Failure to see the relevance of education
- Limited extra-curricular involvement
- Two or more years older than peers
- Frequent change of school
- Retention in one or more grades
- Disruptive classroom behavior

Family

overhead 2.12

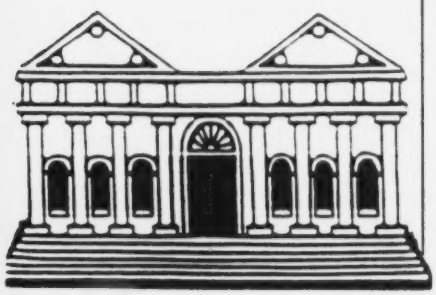
- Residence in a single parent home
- Belonging to a low income family
- Poor home-school communication
- Siblings or parents who are dropouts
- Low educational level of parents
- Excessively stressful home environment
- Limited parent monitoring of student activity
- Lower parental expectations
- Dysfunctional family
- Fewer study aids present in the home

Personal

overhead 2.13

- **Inability to identify with peer group**
- **Friends all outside of school**
- **Poor social adjustment**
- **Difficulty relating to authority figures**
- **Disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes**
- **Frequent health problems**
- **Some form of emotional trauma**
- **Poor self concept**
- **More than 15 hours per week spent on a job**
- **Raising one or more children**
- **Lure of more immediate gratification (outside jobs, wages, experiences)**
- **Substance abuser, delinquent or suicidal**
- **Above average or below average intelligence**
- **Early assumption of adult roles**

The research literature contains several similar approaches to identifying dropouts. Study of this listing will be of value in detecting potential dropouts in your school and this profile will be used in Module 3 in planning your STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives. The purpose of identifying potential dropouts is to allow for carefully targeted programs to be designed for those students who are most at risk. This allows for a concentration of resources to be focused on those students most in need of help, and a higher success rate for dropout prevention programs. Experienced educators will immediately recall individual students who fit this profile and common sense on the part of parents and students will confirm that these typical indicators are likely to lead to a much increased chance of dropping out. By recognizing the presence of these indicators, teachers, parents and students can begin to work at solutions. As always, individual students may have their own unique blend of factors or perhaps only a single factor to deal with. The composite



profile of factors valuable in identifying potential dropouts is also a valuable consolidation of research-based information on the leading causes of dropouts. In this sense it serves as an executive summary of the research in a simplified but usable form. It should be shared with your staff.

B. Public Policy

In a democratic society there are very few solutions that are not based on a consensus as to means and ends. Often, democratic processes are slow and tend to follow public opinion and rely on a groundswell of broadly based support. This is why attempts are made to inform and persuade public opinion through "lobbies" on virtually every political issue. Education is a major expenditure item in government budgets and is not always understood as a public investment in the future. The magnitude of the problems outlined in the earlier sections of this module call for dramatic changes in attitude, in our collective sense of responsibility and in our appreciation of the value of education and training in an industrialized society. In an age when every political priority is debated in a climate of fiscal restriction, we as educators need to lobby for those priorities that we see as vital. This lobbying will be more effective if we cultivate a broad base of public support in the present generation of consumers who are our students.

A dropout rate of about one third does not inspire confidence in our students who vote with their feet, nor in their parents who pay taxes, nor in those other sectors who have to foot the bill. There is a great deal to be proud of in our present educational system but we must not lose sight of the need to offer each and every student "the best possible education." In this endeavor we have every right to expect

the highest sense of responsibility from students, from parents and from all staff in the educational system. The challenge of lowering the dropout rate is not easy, not susceptible to "quick fixes", nor likely to be achieved without significant change.

Fortunately, public policy in the area of dropout prevention is on the move. There is widespread concern at all levels of government, in business and industry and in the public at large. Perhaps an extreme example of this rising tide of public concern across North America is evidenced by the legislative authority in the state of Virginia where truants and dropouts have their driving licences revoked pending satisfactory completion of high school. Several states refuse to make child support allowances if the child is not enrolled in and attending school, thus providing a significant degree of pressure on parents to encourage their dependent children to stay in school. Several states have legislation requiring the reporting of absences and link these reports to social allowance payments.

In Canada, the following initiatives at federal and provincial government levels are already in place and indicate the growing awareness of urgency in improving student retention and completion of a high school diploma. An informed and aware public provides the necessary climate for development of long-term solutions to the dropout problem.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

In its publication "A National Stay-in-School Initiative" (1990), the Federal Government will address the dropout problem on three fronts appropriate to a federal initiative:

1. **Existing labor market preparatory programs and services that can help correct this problem will be expanded and new ones will be developed;**

2. **Partners — governments, business, labor, teachers, parents, social agencies, youth — will be mobilized towards co-operative, concerted action;**

3. **Youth, parents, and the public will be better informed about the realities of the labor market and the need for students to complete their high school education.**

A total of $294.4 million will be allocated to this national stay-in-school initiative over five years. More than half will be devoted to programs and services, more than a quarter to mobilizing partners, and the remainder to raising public awareness.

The Government of Canada now spends $1.8 billion a year on labor-market programs. Training and other programs for youth account for almost half.

Private sector training must be increased if Canada is to remain competitive. Business and labor have clearly recognized this need, and the Government's Labour Force Development Strategy will support co-operative programs designed to stimulate an increase of $1.5 billion in private sector training by 1994.

However, a number of studies have indicated growing business frustration in the attempt to train some young people, typically dropouts, who lack the basic literacy and learning skills required to absorb job-oriented instruction.

Thus a federal stay-in-school initiative, conducted in co-operation with business, labor and the educational system, can be viewed as a logical extension of existing federal efforts to raise general skills levels.

Such a co-operative effort will bring Canada's best knowledge and expertise to bear on an issue that has grave socio-economic implications for our future. These combined efforts should, over time, work to reduce illiteracy, help disadvantaged youth get into the mainstream, reinforce private sector training, and reduce unemployment and welfare costs.

For all these reasons the Government, in a period of fiscal restraint, has chosen to finance the stay-in-school initiative primarily by reallocating some of the funds now assigned to the SEED (Summer Employment/Experience Development) component of the Challenge program.

A Three-Part Initiative

The fundamental purpose of this federal initiative is to respond to the serious threat that the secondary school dropout rate poses to the future productivity of the Canadian economy.

The government believes this threat can best be met through a spirited, imaginative collaboration of many partners co-operating in one national enterprise.

The provinces are already active in this area and continue to make progress in high school student retention. The business community, labor and other partners will be encouraged to participate.

Following a collaborative planning process, specific activities will be designed and co-ordinated, detailed stay-in-school initiatives will be launched in late summer, shortly before the new school year begins.

As a framework for this planning process, the Government of Canada is advancing the following three components of a national initiative (five-year forecast expenditures in brackets):

1. Programs and Services ($166.3 million)

Pilot projects on joint assessment and counselling services, and program delivery services, will be developed at the local level. Initial emphasis will be on selected communities where there is a significant dropout problem, and where strong links are forged between Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC), community organizations, local school boards and provincial or territorial agencies.

These pilot projects will utilize the experience of local or national organizations to:

- **Deliver, on both a summer and year-round basis, an expanded Work Orientation Workshops (WOW) program;**
- **Provide better information and better-targeted programs and services to students who are at risk of dropping out;**
- **Link an expanded CHOICES program with WOW and other services for at-risk students;**
- **Develop and implement a new "mentorship" approach.**

Subject to recommendations arising from the consultation process of the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre (CLMPC), forthcoming negotiations with the provinces on social assistance recipients could explore possibilities for reinforcing a stay-in-school theme.

Subject again to CLMPC recommendations, ways can be found to expand co-operative education to serve at-risk youth in secondary schools better.

Creative career and labor-market information (and especially audio-visual materials) better oriented to at-risk youth will be developed, sensitive to local conditions and distributed through local networks.

To aid the design of programs and services, the first national survey of school-leavers will be undertaken for Employment and Immigration Canada by Statistics Canada in co-operation with provincial and territorial education ministries.

Canada Career Week will be expanded and will become an integral part of the stay-in-school initiative.

WOW — A Program That Works

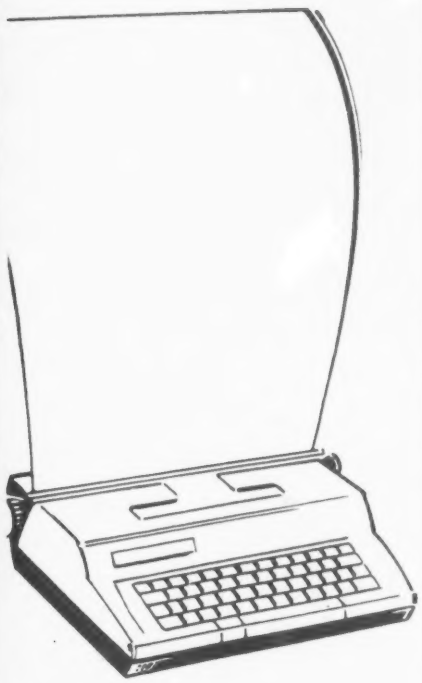
Work Orientation Workshops (WOW) provide recent and potential high school dropouts with guidance and information concerning their future education and labor market options.

Combined with on-the-job experience, WOW encourages students to continue their education or seek specific skills training. Workshop activities range from life skills training and personal financial management to a study of how companies operate, relationships with co-workers, and workplace practices and expectations. The on-the-job aspect of the program helps young people understand the talents and education that are necessary in an increasingly skills-driven labor market.

Introduced in 1985 as an experimental summer project, WOW was expanded in 1989 to include pilot year-round projects in every province. The budget last year was $20.2 million, with more than 10,000 student participants. In 1990 the program will be expanded further to $35.2 million.

CHOICES — Technology and Careers

CHOICES is an interactive computer data base containing information on occupations, programs of study and Canadian educational institutions. Individuals may enter information about their interests, aptitudes, education, salary expectations and so on, and obtain a personal printout listing suitable occupations. Additional information can be obtained on educational programs and the Canadian schools offering them, and on the characteristics of each occupation.



2. Mobilizing Partners ($76.6 million)

National and local consultations will be launched and sustained to stimulate dialogue, exchange information and develop solutions to the dropout problem.

To manage this ongoing consultative process, the Government will, if necessary, support the initial creation of a national non-profit institution in collaboration with business, labor, the academic community and education ministries.

In co-operation with provincial governments, the private sector, selected school boards and other organizations, demonstration projects will be developed to test improved career counselling and other ways to enable more students to complete high school.

A series of national and local colloquia will be launched through business and labor sponsors and with the participation of educators, education ministries, and parents' organizations.

3. Information ($53.5 million)

In co-operation with education ministries and private co-sponsors as appropriate, a national, multi-faceted information program will raise public awareness of the dropout problem and encourage youth to stay in school. Focusing on realistic career options and the fundamental values of a high school education, the information program will be directed primarily to at-risk youth and their parents.

The following position paper was prepared by Alberta Education in early 1991 and is expected to form the basis of an approved policy statement.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

ALBERTA EDUCATION'S COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

TOWARDS A PROVINCIAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE DROP-OUTS IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS

Alberta Education has a clear goal of helping students be the best they can be and a mandate to provide the best possible education for all Alberta students. Consequently, there is serious concern when any student leaves school before attaining a high school diploma or certificate of achievement, or without the necessary prerequisites to pursue further education or training.

Speaking to the Alberta School Trustees' Association on November 6, 1990, Minister of Education, Hon. Jim Dinning, proposed a challenging goal - to decrease the drop-out rate in Alberta schools by 10 percent this year (1991-92). In addition, he states:

" . . . in the longer term, no student will leave school before he or she is ready - ready to work, ready to continue their studies,

Sunday SUN

DROPOUT DISASTER

Lotteries Page 10

Solution an elusive one to curing dropout ills

Nobody has a grip on why nearly one-third of teens quit school

Alberta teens turn their backs on education

WASTE 'STAGGERING'

ready to make a positive contribution to society. Programs will be designed for students and schools will be a place where students want to be."

Why are we concerned about drop-outs? Alberta, with other provinces and countries such as the United States, England, and Germany, have identified high drop-out rates as a problem that has serious implications for the individual and society. From a personal perspective, such students' entry into the mainstream of society as confident, productive, independent citizens is delayed, and for some, permanently jeopardized. From a societal perspective, our rapidly changing society demands increasingly higher levels of education, building the foundation for the lifelong learning required to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. From both a moral and economic perspective, we must make every effort to maximize young people's growth and development and assist them to become productive members of society.

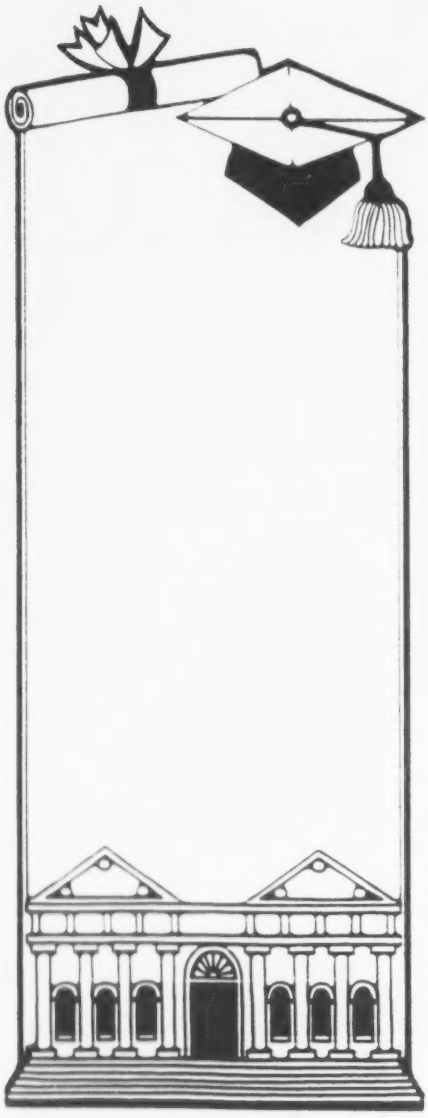
Certainly, Alberta Education, school systems, and schools must take a leading role in resolving this problem. However, there are other players that also have a key role. These players include other provincial government departments such as Alberta Career Development and Employment and Alberta Family and Social Services; community agencies; the federal government; and the family, peers; and community agencies, to name a few.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

How do we identify drop-outs?

A fundamental challenge when discussing the drop-out issue is to decide how drop-outs will be identified and how the drop-out rates calculated. While many definitions have been proposed, the following definition can be applied consistently without individual student

tracking, both at the local and provincial levels. This definition establishes a diploma or certificate of achievement as a societal "benchmark" for a minimum level of education. Consistent application of this definition will support the development of a solid information base upon which we can monitor progress and assess initiatives which encourage students to stay in school.



In "Education in Alberta: Facts and Figures (1988/89)" early school leavers are defined as:

> **Those public, separate and private school students who are 14 to 18 years of age as of September 1st of a school year and enrolled on September 30th, who did not complete a diploma or other program and are not in school the following September 30th.**

This definition corresponds closely to the Grade 9 to 12 student population, and also includes overage students in Grade 7 and 8.

Using the above definition to calculate the "drop-out" rate, approximately 8.3 per cent of Alberta secondary students drop out of school each year. It is interesting to note that even though the drop-out rates have decreased over the past ten years (see page 4 of this module), approximately one in three students who entered Grade 9 in 1984-85 left school without a high school credential.

Some students may not attain the benchmark of a high school diploma because they do not find the school-based programs leading to a high school credential relevant to their personal goals and needs. Therefore, it must be recognized that a few students would always be designated as drop outs if this definition is accepted. For example, those students, who as part of their personal career

plan, leave school and enter an industry-based or further education program (e.g., apprenticeship) would be considered drop-outs. This definition would also designate students who leave school for a short period and then return to complete their high school diploma as drop-outs, as well as those who may attain entry into a university faculty of their choice without all of the courses required for a diploma.

A recent initiative of the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada will gather data that will allow schools to recognize and compare the various roles played by the schools.

participation rates: the extent to which young people make use of education opportunities
retention rates: the extent to which young people stay in school from one year to the next, and
graduation rates: the extent to which young people obtain graduation diplomas or certificates.

Why do some students drop out?

According to Radwanski, there are three main categories of reasons students give to explain why they drop out:

School-related reasons include dislike of school, lack of interest on the part of teachers and staff, and boredom with the curriculum. Difficulty with particular subjects or with overall course material is ranked far lower as a contributing factor. (p. 88)

Personal reasons include a range from problems at home to emotional difficulties, to ill health, to pregnancy. (p. 99)

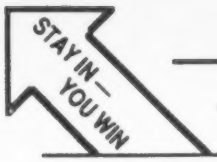
Economic reasons are varied but students generally work either out of financial need or because the workplace represents adulthood, money and freedom. (p. 96)

Most of these students are identifiable when in school as being "at risk" - at risk of dropping out and/or at risk of failure within school. High risk students often have a poor attendance record, low reading skills, a tendency to be over-age for their grade, or to have disciplinary problems. Factors that increase "risk" from outside of school include paid employment, family problems and a sibling and/or parents who did not complete high school. The risk of dropping out increases as more and more of these factors affect any given student. In addition, while the ease with which "at risk" students can obtain employment is clearly a factor in increasing drop outs, so too are family and societal expectations related to education. The issues are further complicated as each student, with unique needs and background, functions within the expectations, opportunities and resources of the school and community.

What can we do to reduce drop outs?

While considerable effort and resources from within the education community and others have been brought to bear on this problem over many years, it is difficult to determine what works. We need to be able to identify those successful initiatives that directly address the needs of the student who is clearly "at risk." As well we need to identify those initiatives, usually indirect, that help make school relevant and motivate all students to learn, reducing the number of students who become "at risk."

Appendix A outlines some of the direct and indirect initiatives in place in Alberta which are designed to encourage students to stay in school. More specific initiatives are proposed in the next section of this paper.



A STRATEGY TO REDUCE ALBERTA'S SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE

All of the partners - Alberta Education, students, schools and school systems, parents, other government departments, community agencies and business and industry - need to work together even more effectively to reduce drop-outs. We need to propose, implement and assess short- and long- term strategies. We need to identify and focus available resources more efficiently to ensure they complement, rather than duplicate or compete. As we work toward reducing the drop-out rate, some guidelines need to be considered. All initiatives need to:

- **involve students in communicating what they they find relevant and worthwhile**
- **recognize the key role of the teacher in helping the student find school relevant and worthwhile**
- **recognize and expand the existing support systems, enhancing key players' ability to respond to local needs**
- **recognize that reducing the drop-out rate cannot be a short-term commitment. Results will be difficult to address in the short run. Significant results will require long-term commitment and monitoring**
- **recognize that resources allocated to helping "at risk" students should not penalize students who are not "at risk"**
- **recognize that the factors that lead a student to drop out are complex and involve factors both within and outside the school. Often the problems build from those encountered at a very early age.**

To do this, the roles and responsibilities should be clarified, with specific initiatives delegated to particular players. For example:

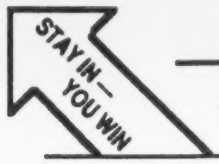
At the federal level, the commitment could be to provide financial support, monitor and share information about related projects across the country, as well as assure compatability of programs for Natives in band-operated schools and in provincial schools.

At the provincial level the commitment could be to develop guidelines for, evaluation of, and communication about projects which prevent drop-outs and help adolescents wishing to complete high school. Alberta Education could establish an information system for all students as they progress through school and if/when they change schools as well as ensure curricula and resources are relevant to student needs, interest and abilities. Provincial departments with related mandates could support interventions that have long-term benefit and research projects to add to current knowledge about causes of drop-outs and serve as a clearinghouse for information on initiatives.

At the school jurisdiction level the commitment could be to develop and carry out programs that respond to local needs and to effectively use community resources; coordinate the efforts of all parties at the community level (education, business, social agencies); follow-up local graduates and drop-outs to determine factors that help students succeed; as well as support those who do drop out through counselling and expand opportunities for educational programs when they wish to complete their high school program.

Take Action:

To help us make effective decisions, we must quickly improve and expand our information base, establishing systems that ensure the information base continues to be up-to-date and readily accessible to all of the key players.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 1: *THAT the Interdepartmental Task Force on High School Drop-Outs which has been recently established, identify and promote linkages with the key players, clarify areas of responsibility, and provide advice to appropriate players on strategies and initiatives that will reduce drop-outs.*

Recommendation No. 2: *THAT a standard definition for "drop-outs" be adopted by the key players. We recommend that it be: Early school leavers (in Alberta) are defined as those public, separate and private school students who are 14 to 18 years of age as of September 30 of a school year, who did not complete a diploma or other program and are not in school the following September 30.*

Recommendation No. 3: *THAT a three-month development project be undertaken to identify and analyze related initiatives (presently in place or proposed) sponsored by the key players directed at dealing with the "at risk" student. The research report will describe target groups, results, costs, and funding sources. The report will propose strategies to improve the overall effectiveness of resource allocation among the key players. The database should be kept current.*

Recommendation No. 4: *THAT study of labour force participation rates be conducted relating the influences of economic development and its impact on school completion.*

Recommendation No. 5: *THAT the information from the action plans (developed in response to the Minister's vision) be consolidated and drawn into one source document.*

We must support teachers, counselors and schools so that they can

more effectively identify "at risk" students and address their needs.

Recommendation No. 6: *THAT all school staff take an ongoing proactive stance in encouraging students to stay in school.*

Recommendation No. 7: *THAT school funding be adjusted to reflect school attendance a minimum of twice a year.*

Recommendation No. 8: *THAT a multimedia inservice package be prepared within the year to assist teachers at all grade levels to identify "at risk" students. The package would also model a variety of successful intervention strategies.*

We must work more closely with the family of "at risk" students to build partnerships that help the student address his or her needs and make appropriate career plans.

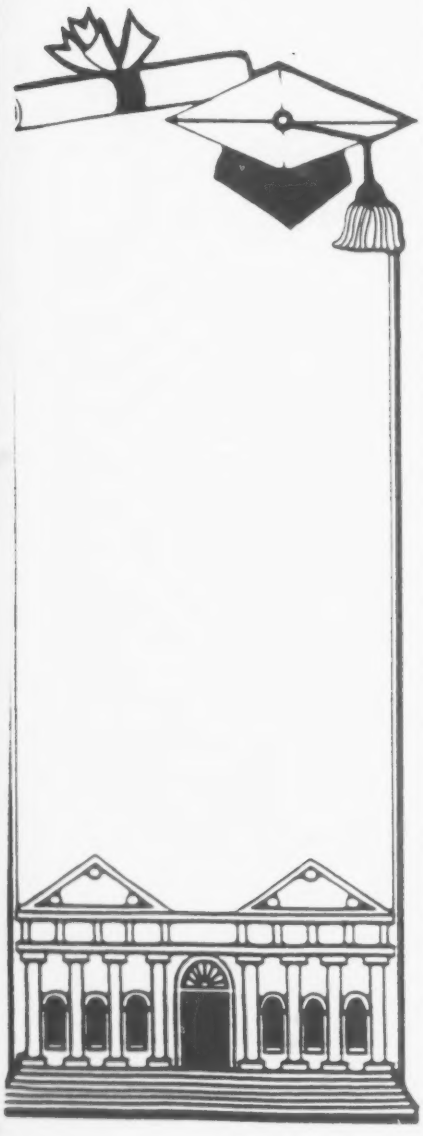
Recommendation No. 9: *THAT school parent advisory committees and inter-agency social and health services committees be urged to work with schools to resolve the drop-out problem in the community.*

We must encourage students who have left school to continue their education.

Recommendation No. 10: *THAT Alberta Family and Social Services and Alberta Career Development and Employment develop strategies and support systems that encourage students to return to school and complete their program on either a full- or part-time basis.*

We need to expand students' options and opportunities to take

courses and programs which provide individuals an opportunity to develop and master the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to make a successful transition into the adult world.



Recommendation No. 11: *THAT school systems provide flexible access to programming including technological options to improve students' opportunities of completing their educational program.*

Recommendation No. 12: *THAT alternative delivery strategies be identified, developed, assessed and, where appropriate, supported.*

Recommendation No. 13: *THAT the number of partnerships between schools and the community be increased to more effectively link work and education.*

Recommendation No. 14: *THAT all key players be invited to participate in a coordinated, high impact marketing campaign designed to motivate students to stay in school and obtain the highest possible level of achievement.*

Recommendation No. 15: *THAT the current school leaving age should be reviewed with consideration to raising it to reflect the economic reality.*

Recommendation No. 16: *THAT the Employment Standards Act be amended to reflect the above.*

Respectfully Submitted:
START Advisory Committee
February, 1991

APPENDIX A

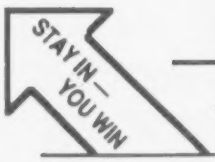
DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

1. HIGH NEEDS

The school boards have focused on improving language skills and self-esteem, which has been found to be a significant variable affecting student performance. They have also focused on other factors that affect students' performance such as nutrition and health care, satisfaction with schooling, attendance, the frequency of drop-outs, and repetition of grades. If these initiatives are effective, the students should achieve better grades, their self-esteem and confidence should improve, there should be fewer behavioral and attendance problems, fewer drop-outs, and a reduction in the failure rate.

2. START

The START Program is a federally funded early school leaver intervention program. In cooperation with Canada Employment and Immigration, the Alberta Education Advisory Committee ensured that the START Program compliments the school retention initiatives already in place. Alberta Education recommended criteria for funding these projects developed by local jurisdictions, and will share liaison and assessment with the federal government. The Request for Proposal package was mailed to all jurisdiction and accredited private schools November 9, 1990. Proposals were due by December 21, 1990. Funding of projects began February 1991 with a total budget of $1 million for the first 12 months. The program is expected to run until March 1994 with funding for the final two years still to be announced.



3. INTER-DEPARTMENTAL TASK FORCE ON HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

A Task Force has been established to design measures to reduce the current high school drop-out rate in the province of Alberta with a special focus on regions or communities with exceptionally high drop-out rates.

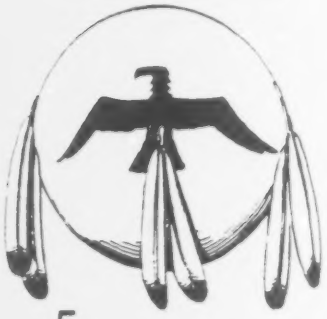
The task force will:

- **gather and review published information on drop-outs and programs aimed at reducing the drop-out rate in Alberta**
- **gather and review published information on drop-outs and programs aimed at reducing the drop-out rate in other jurisdictions**
- **determine the range of primary research tasks for the project including:**
  - **a comparative study of the drop-out rates throughout the province**
  - **a survey of the efforts by the other provinces to reduce their drop-out rates**
  - **a study of the socioeconomic profile of typical drop-outs throughout the province**
  - **a study of the human and social costs of dropping out of school**
  - **establishing an overall research budget for the new measures to be undertaken**
- **obtain the views of Albertans throughout the province on why drop-outs are quitting school prior to graduating and what can be done to lower the rate. The participants could include former drop-outs, at-risk students, teachers, administrators, parents, community groups. counsellors, employers, etc.**

- **design a variety of measures for the purpose of reducing the drop-out rate. The measures will reflect the views and responsibilities of the various participants while acknowledging the useful role played by various agencies in attempting to reduce the number of drop-outs.**

The task force will, at least initially, be comprised of designated officials from Alberta Education and Alberta Career Development and Employment. Other departments will be invited to participate. (These will include Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Family and Social Services and Alberta Health.)

4. NATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM



The Native Education project provides support to school boards for the provision of education programs and direct services, including: home/school liaison worker, Native tutor/teacher aide, Native language instructor, counsellors, Native Education coordinator, Native liaison for social studies, Native crafts and/or dancing, resource people, Native cultural events, and annual provincial Native parents conferences. One hundred and seventy-five Native people have been hired by school jurisdictions as liaison workers. All 55 funded projects have increases in Native student attendance and the concomitant reductions in drop-outs as one of their main objectives.

5. INTEGRATED OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAM

The five-year Integrated Occupational Program (IOP) is designed for students who experience difficulty with the regular program. The IOP is intended to provide students with the skills necessary for employment or entrepreneurship by providing a combination of core and occupational courses. Students can enter the program at the Grade 8 level and proceed through five levels of IOP courses to obtain a Certificate of Achievement. There were over 2,000 students in the program in 1989-90.

6. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Alberta Education is responsible for providing educational programs to students who reside in institutions, such as a Young Offender's Centre, a hospital, or a shelter for abused adults. School authorities provide education services in these institutions under an agreement with the Government or the institution. Students placed in group homes may attend local schools. The support of such programs enables young people to continue or resume their education while in the care of institutions and helps to prevent early school leaving.

7. WORK ORIENTATION WORKSHOPS (WOW)

Work Orientation Workshops (WOW) is a program offered by Canada Employment and Immigration, designed to help potential and recent early school leavers assess their educational and employment options. It also is intended to encourage them to complete their education or seek skills training.

In Alberta, the program operates during July and August through local sponsoring organizations who hire local "trainers" to oversee the youths in the project. Each project involves 10 or 11 youths who have been referred to the program via the school counsellor or authority. Priority is normally given to youths aged 15 to 17 who are potential drop-outs and have the potential to complete high school. The year-round WOW pilot has operated from October to March, and will accommodate recent drop-outs.

Each WOW project offers:

- **2-4 weeks of workshops covering life skills, communication skills, personal financial management, workplace practice, and future employment needs planning; and,**
- **4-8 weeks work experience whereby participants develop an awareness of the demands of the workplace, assess their current skill levels, and identify good work habits and attitudes.**

8. RESEARCH

The *School Achievement Indicators Project* of the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada will develop "involvement" indicators - participation rates, retention rates, and graduation rates - which are critical to monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of efforts to reduce the numbers of early school leavers.

A longitudinal study of the transition of young people from school to work. The study tracks 2985 high school and university graduates in three cities, Edmonton, Toronto and Sudbury, through surveys conducted in 1985, 1987 and 1989. Particular emphasis is placed on how students integrate into the workplace and post-secondary programs, their experiences and their assessment of the adequacy of their preparation for dealing with the realities of the workplace. The study also traces changes in student attitudes and behaviours regarding education and employment. The data will allow a more comprehensive understanding of the changing transitional school-to-work patterns and their implications for educational and labour market institutions.

The Calgary Board of Education, with the aid of Alberta Education, is preparing a Student Withdrawal Report Report program for the 1990-91 school year. Its purpose is to collect reliable data regarding the number of students who drop out, create a profile of the drop-out and provide information required for effective planning and evaluation of drop-out prevention and recovery programs. The tracking of drop-outs is the first step to implementing a retention project.

9. INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Alberta Education is improving the quality of the data collected on students and the efficiency with which it is collected. The Educational information Exchange will include a student registry which will provide data in a number of areas such as school enrollment, course

enrollment, number of students who leave school early and student achievement. This information will help the department to identify potential problems or concerns in the education of students and to develop appropriate solutions.

10. CURRICULUM INITIATIVES

The Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) courses enable students in rural areas to take many of the same courses offered to urban students, and to pursue their studies at home or in a local community learning centre. ADLC also provides academic upgrading for people who are resuming their education, and who need to strengthen basic skills before pursuing regular course work.

11. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Guidance and counselling services and programs are viewed as an integral component of school programs. These services and programs provided by the schools encompass the areas of (a) educational (b) personal and social (c) career development.

Career Development Services for Alberta Students and Guidance and Counselling Services in Alberta Schools provide a framework for organizing and delivering career development services. Through career guidance, individuals learn to understand themselves and their environment, to be aware of work opportunities open to them, and to choose for themselves a suitable lifestyle. Career counselling assists individuals to clarify their goals, understand their interests, aptitude and abilities, and overcome obstacles to effective career planning and preparation.

12. CAREER PLANNING

Career development is both an integral part of the school program and an aspect of the guidance and counselling services. Beginning

in Grade 1, students are exposed to units on Life Careers, and Career Awareness, Planning and Preparation. The new compulsory course, Career and Life Management (CALM 20), will continue this goal of encouraging every student to consider possible career choices while in high school and the implication of not continuing with their education. These courses also work to help students develop self-esteem, learn to get along with others, realistically assess their own abilities and goals, and adapt to change.

13. PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

Partnership initiatives are increasing the communication and interaction of business and industry and community agencies with schools. There is increased involvement of parents, business and industry, other government departments and professional associations in the design, validation and implementation of curriculum. For example, students learn off-campus with local businesses. Some schools are "adopted" by a business. Community schools are attempting to shape their programming to better meet the needs of students who wish to return to school after having dropped out or to prevent students from discontinuing their education before they have received a certificate or diploma by enlisting the aid of parents and the rest of the community to ensure that all students have the opportunity and are encouraged to get a good education.

14. CO-OP EDUCATION PROJECT

The recently introduced "cooperative education" programs encourage schools and businesses in the community to work together and help young people develop the skill they will need in daily life or future careers. Nine programs have been funded with a budget up to $200,000 over four years based on a Letter of Agreement between Employment and Immigration and Alberta Education.

STAY IN — YOU WIN

15. EXTENSION PROGRAM

Alberta Education provides grants to school boards to assist them in providing educational programs to students who are either beyond the normal school age or who wish to attend school outside of the regular school hours or during the summer. These programs provide flexibility to early school leavers who may wish to continue their education while working or caring for their families.

There are three programs that comprise the extension program:

a. Adult basic education which provides Grades 1-9 level adult basic education through boards or community colleges on a full or part-time, day or evening basis.

b. School extension programs during the day for those 20 years of age or over in regular high school programs or in adult high school programs; or evening adult programs for Grades 10-12; or summer school Grades 1-12 programs. These may be offered by boards, private schools or community colleges.

c. Special education extension programs for those 20 years of age or over requiring special education.

This section on public policy has outlined the federal and provincial programs in place to encourage stay-in-school programs and reduce the dropout rate. Public awareness is growing and there is a clear priority for increased efforts in the near future. The remainder of this chapter deals with solutions which are appropriate for implementation at the school level. Although it is critical to have public and political support for staying in school; effective school-based programs are our best chance for success. This is why the STAY IN—YOU WIN initiative has been designed for use at the school level.

C. Mentoring

The role of mentor has recently taken on added significance beyond the dictionary definition of "a wise and trusted advisor." Although wisdom and trust are still required for effective mentoring, the examples of mentoring given in Module Four illustrate a broad range of supportive activities in helping students with personal and academic difficulty. This chapter on solutions contains a number of proven strategies that emphasize improved human relations. One of the key findings in the literature on dropouts is the fact that few students discuss their decision to drop out with teachers, their peers or even their parents. The table below illustrates that those students who leave to start work are least likely to discuss their decision with school staff and that in general, only about one third of students talk with staff. This table is taken from "A Comparative Analysis of Drop-Outs and Non Drop-Outs in Ontario Secondary Schools," Michael Sullivan, 1988.

Reasons for Leaving and Contact with Staff (Ontario-wide)

Reasons for leaving	Spoke to staff (%)	Did not speak to staff (%)
Start work/career	32	68
Bored/Disliked school	39	61
Problems with a teacher	34	66
Married/Pregnant	35	65
Personal/Home	44	56
Total	37	63

Mentoring is a strategy that matches a concerned adult with a student in need of wise counsel, emotional support and an effective role model. Many programs involve selected adults who are oriented in the basics of effective mentoring in school or community based programs like these:

- **Four hundred chapters of the Kiwanis Club have active mentoring programs where members of the service club meet weekly with their student. Other examples might include Rotary, Kinsmen, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, etc.**

- **Senior citizens have proven to be effective mentors because they have the necessary time and experience to show concern. Retired teachers are often known to volunteer as mentors and research has shown that older people from less-advantaged backgrounds can be very helpful in reaching out to disadvantaged children because they understand the problems.**

- **Several mentoring programs involve teachers, administrators and other adults in the school.**
- **Parents can often be incorporated in mentoring programs through the Parent Advisory Council or more informally. Often a parent of a teenage student can understand the particular problems of someone else's child with clarity and objectivity.**
- **Some programs have used university and college students through collaboration with fraternities, sororities and even selected academic programs.**
- **Religious organizations may be helpful in matching their members with selected students.**
- **Increasingly, business partnerships are being forged between industry and individual schools. Proctor & Gamble in the United States has established "Project Aspire" which focuses on career and financial planning for students in need. (See Chapter 5, "Business Partnerships," in Module Four.)**

An excellent introduction to mentoring is One on One: A Guide for Establishing Mentor Programs, 1989, published by the U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C. It recommends the following functions for mentor programs:

- **School-based tutoring. In this kind of program, mentors work with school-age children to provide extra instructional help in a specific subject where improvement is needed. The mentors' role is not only to help the children raise their grades but also to improve the children's attitude and increase their self-confidence and pride in achievement.**

- **Career education. Mentors in programs that focus on career education try to prepare their proteges for entry into the work force by helping them understand the expectations of employers about attitude, preparedness, and skills. They offer the children a chance to see the practical application of the subjects they study in school. Other support includes bringing the child to the mentor's place of work, teaching a career-related skill, and helping the child to get a summer job or to obtain employment after graduation.**

- **Role modeling. In role modeling programs, mentors serve as a positive example to children by virtue of their productive lives, which usually are attributed to the choices the mentors have made. Role modeling programs tend to match mentors and proteges on a same-sex basis. This is especially beneficial to males from female-led households, pregnant teens and teenage mothers, disabled children, and youths in trouble with the law. This type of program works to increase self-esteem, improve academic skills, provide cultural enrichment, and expand each student's horizons.**

Another valuable booklet is Mentoring Programs for At-Risk Youth, Jay Smink, February 1990, published by the Clemson University National Dropout Prevention Centre, Clemson, SC 29634-5111, U.S.A.

In establishing a mentoring program it may be advisable to focus scarce resources on those students most in need. Mentor programs, like any successful partnership, are designed to achieve the goals and objectives of the people involved, the schools, and the community. Because mentor programs are built on shared trust and respect, they require careful planning and time to develop, implement, and evaluate.

The following points should be considered in the beginning of program development:

- **What specific problems need to be addressed? Before a mentor program can be established, it is important to know what problems the program will seek to deal with. For example, does the school have a high dropout rate? Is there a high teenage pregnancy rate?**

- **Which children — and how many — will take part in the program? For example, does a particular elementary or secondary class need help? Or do special populations — learning disabled, handicapped, or pregnant teens? Once the target population has been selected, the number of mentors that will be required and the type of commitment that will be needed from the sponsors will become obvious.**

- **How will the program be led and co-ordinated? Mentor programs need leaders to help plan and co-ordinate the program. Any mentor program that lacks good leadership and co-ordination will fail.**

- **Which existing mentor programs have a similar focus? It is useful to examine exemplary district-wide programs; college-based mentor/tutoring programs; and programs designed for special populations such as teenage mothers, handicapped children, and boys from female-headed households.**

It is important that the specific goals of your program be fully communicated to the mentors and many projects provide training sessions for effective orientation. The following tips are designed to make training sessions more successful.

- **Sessions should take place in one day or over a two-day period.**
- **Training site should be pleasant, conducive to learning, and centrally located; refreshments should be provided.**
- **Experienced, enthusiastic mentors make excellent trainers. Consider bringing experienced mentors together in a "mentor panel" to share their experiences with the trainees and stimulate discussion.**
- **Potential mentors should be organized into small working groups of about five persons each, including a trainer. Small groups generally facilitate the active participation of all the trainees.**
- **To keep the program interesting, trainers should not lecture at length but should use a variety of learning techniques such as role playing, slides and films, and training manuals.**
- **The training sessions should help the mentors enhance their skills as well as learn new ones.**
- **During the practice sessions, new mentors should receive feedback on how they are doing.**
- **At the end of the sessions, the mentors should complete a course evaluation form.**

An effective mentoring program can reduce the likelihood of a student dropping out through lack of an opportunity to talk with a concerned adult. Since many students do not know how to explore their options fully, care should be taken to integrate mentoring programs with school counselling services.

Module Four of this STAY IN—YOU WIN package contains a number of examples of mentoring programs.

SEE ALSO IN MODULE FOUR:

PROJECT #1
PROJECT #2
PROJECT #21
PROJECT #26
PROJECT #32
PROJECT #33
PROJECT #46

D. Peer Group Tutoring

Another effective solution to the problems experienced by the potential dropout is an active peer group tutoring system, often known as the "buddy" system. Cohen, Kulik & Kulik in "Educational Outcomes of Tutoring: A Meta-Analysis of Findings," American Educational Research Journal, 1982, report as follows:

A meta-analysis of findings from 65 independent evaluations of school tutoring programs showed that these programs have positive effects on the academic performance and attitudes of those who receive tutoring. Tutored students outperformed control students on examinations, and they also developed positive attitudes toward the subject matter covered in the tutorial programs. The meta-analysis also showed that tutoring programs have positive effects on children who serve as tutors. Like the children they helped, the tutors gained a better understanding of and developed more positive attitudes toward the subject matter covered in the tutorial program. Participation in tutoring programs had little or no effect, however, on the self-esteem of tutors and tutees.

One of the major advantages of peer-group tutoring is that it does not require a great restructuring of existing school programs and services; nor does it require large amounts of new money. The benefits lie in the prestige of being a tutor and the increased sense of responsibility that this brings and the fact that the tutee has a trusted peer with whom to discuss academic or social difficulties. All across North America the strategy has been used as an intervention technique for preventing dropout. Teenagers tend to trust people in their own age group and rely on them for confidential advice. The quality of this advice may not be based on professional expertise, but as part of an integrated dropout prevention program it can make a real and timely difference.

The research evidence and practical experience indicate that a structured approach works better than simply leaving tutoring to casual hallway discussions between friends. Clearly both tutor and tutee will benefit if there is already a strong personal relationship or a set of common interests that can form the basis of a workable arrangement. Studies have shown that the positive effects of tutoring are greater than computer-assisted instruction or instruction with individualized learning packages or programmed instruction. The emphasis is on a one-on-one interpersonal relationship. Not only can tutoring be of value in improving academic standings, it can also be highly motivational in dropout prevention. Because tutoring improves attitudes of both the tutor and tutee it is recommended as a program for all high school students. As with mentoring programs, it requires an effective training session and a clear indication of referral points if there are serious social problems. Because structured programs work better than relatively informal approaches, the following organizational system is proposed as a starting point for high school students.

STEP ONE:

Decide whether the school counselling staff or home-room teachers or the house system will co-ordinate the buddy system.

STEP TWO:

Decide on the specific goals for your buddy system; for example:

- **Academic difficulties**
- **Personal problems**
- **Improvement of attendance**
- **Cultural differences**
- **Other**

STEP THREE:

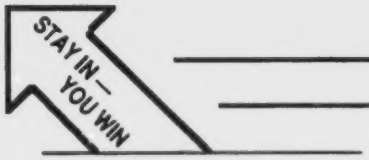
Decide on a universal buddy system where every student is paired with a friend or a selective system where potential dropouts only participate after identification as outlined earlier and in Module Three of the STAY IN—YOU WIN package.

STEP FOUR:

Establish a convenient frequency schedule for meetings so that there is regular opportunity for intensive discussions. Arrange for a simple way of flagging students who are experiencing difficulty. Perhaps the Students Council or the Parent Advisory Council can play a valuable role in tracking this system. It is important to remember that confidentiality and a separation from the usual school administration may be helpful in fully and frankly exploring difficulties. Stress on all participants that a major objective is to provide a "distant early warning system" to head off impending problems. The tutee must be actively involved in deciding whether or not a formal approach to school personnel is required.

STEP FIVE:

Actively involve the students themselves in designing and operating the buddy system and in changing it as a result of periodic evaluations.



In preventing dropouts, a major focus of the buddy system and peer-group tutoring is to minimize the chance of a student dropping out without full and adequate discussion of any difficulties that arise during the high school years.

Overall objectives for a peer-tutoring or buddy system might be:

- **to provide a regular and friendly opportunity of discussing problems with another person your age.**
- **To develop a trust relationship between tutor and tutee.**
- **To ensure that preventive steps are taken to avoid serious difficulties by referring to appropriate school staff members whenever the tutor and tutee agree that the difficulty cannot be solved without outside resources.**
- **To enhance academic and social well being.**

Dr. Rey Carr of the University of Victoria has directed peer group training programs and observes that the 2000 peer programs operating in Canada have proved highly successful. The following elements are identified by Carr as crucial to a successful peer program, be it in academic areas or in dealing with social and personal problems:

- **The program must be led and supervised by an adult specifically trained and experienced in peer helping.**
- **The program must consist of structured training sessions, consisting of a specific, rationalized and tested curriculum.**

- **The training environment must encourage enjoyment and involvement.**
- **Those persons selected as trainees must feel their training is special and based on their needs and their existing skills.**
- **The training methods must emphasize interactive, experiential components with opportunities for coaching and feedback.**
- **The sessions must feature applied activities with role rehearsal, homework and practical assignments.**

Carr emphasizes that a successful crisis intervention program works with the peer group influence system, not against it. Peer counselors, therefore, are vitally important in the promotion and development of positive peer interaction.

"The negative effects of the peer group have been so grossly exaggerated and sensationalized that they have overshadowed the more powerful and positive effects," says Carr. "The importance of peer relationships has been little understood and seriously undervalued. However, several researchers have stressed that the peer group may be the most important force for learning pro-social behaviors, social and sexual competence and mastery of aggressive impulses."

SEE ALSO IN MODULE FOUR:

PROJECT #5 PROJECT #27
PROJECT #16 PROJECT #47

E. Counselling

There are clear indications in the research literature that individual self-esteem and a high degree of motivation, involvement and engagement in the school program are major factors behind staying in school. There is evidence that school climate is best enhanced by strong leadership and participation by all staff in the creation of an environment where students and staff trust and respect each other and there is an emphasis on good inter-personal relationships. Traditionally, counselors have the training and avocation which can lead to the creation and improvement of an effective school climate. An effective counselling program can do much to prevent dropouts and co-ordinate the efforts of staff, parents and community.

For example, the mentoring and peer-group tutoring concepts outlined earlier in this chapter can result in significant extra human resources being available to assist in dropout prevention. Since school counselling staff are already under pressure to provide services in personal crisis intervention, career and vocational advice, academic and life-skill development, and other priorities like substance abuse prevention, these extra human resources are particularly valuable. Frequently, the potential dropout will have a number of problems which compound the difficulty of coping with school-related issues. By creating an effective network of human support the counselling staff can often mobilize resources outside the school to focus on the problems of individual students. Dr. Victor Herbert, superintendent of New York City's dropout prevention program, advocates the case-management approach where a collaborative partnership is built with outside agencies:

The case-management approach is very important for at-risk students who are known to have a very difficult time establishing one-on-one relationships with adults. By providing concrete help in dealing with institutions and relationships that seem remote and threatening, case managers model a trusting adult/teenager relationship which boosts self-esteem and self-knowledge.

This case management approach is endorsed by the Radwanski Report on dropouts when it recommends:

That consideration be given to contracting with community-based social service agencies to locate teams of appropriate professionals within high schools to provide troubled young people with ready access to services such as crisis intervention, family counselling, economic and social counselling, and help with psychological, emotional or medical problems.

Examples already exist in Alberta of active partnerships with community police, AADAC, Career Development & Employment, and local Health Units and Social Services. Although the number of students who require this high degree of professionalism may be small, their needs are perhaps the greatest and they exhibit the personal and social characteristics of potential dropouts. It is critical that these students experience a close relationship with a mentor, a "buddy," a counselor or an individual trusted teacher. Such close personal relationships can also be a powerful preventive force in minimizing the personal and social problems experienced by most teenagers.

It is important to note that the State of California has recently established a Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. After three years of study and research, the inter-disciplinary task force pinpoints poor self-esteem as the critical

factor in a wide range of social maladies — substance abuse, teen pregnancy, poverty, crime, educational failure, welfare dependency, and child abuse. It maintains that self-esteem can serve as a vaccine to these social problems. Although this idea is not new, the California initiative is hailed as the first time that government has seriously addressed the root causes of social problems and been prepared to invest money on finding preventive measures. As perhaps the most dominant social institution affecting teenagers, education must be perceived as part of the solution rather than part of the problem in alienating youth. This California initiative is described in Toward a State of Esteem: The final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility, California State Department of Education, 1990. Copies of the 160-page report are available for $4 each from the Bureau of Publications, California State Department of Education, Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.

Readers interested in a more extensive survey of the research are referred to "Social Competence at School: Relation Between Social Responsibility and Academic Achievement," by Kathryn Wentzel, Review of Educational Research, Spring 1991. The blending of self-esteem development with a sense of individual and social responsibility is summarized in the following guidelines.

Seven Ways to Nurture Self-Esteem in Others

Appreciating everyone's worth and acting responsibly toward one another are important components of self-esteem. Here are some of the ways we can foster self-esteem in others:

1. **Give personal attention. To provide this, we need to learn to listen respectfully.**

2. **Demonstrate respect, acceptance, and support. Human beings need to be treated with respect from the first moment of their lives.**

3. **Encourage healthy achievement. Living with expectations creates meaning in people's lives.**

4. **Provide a sensible structure. To explore and grow, human beings need limits, guidance, and rules that are enforced consistently and fairly.**

5. **Appreciate the benefits of a multicultural society. Diversity is a source of strength.**

6. **Negotiate conflicts. It is never appropriate to inflict injury, shame, or humiliation on another human being.**

7. **Encourage autonomy and competence. We act responsibly when we encourage people to grow beyond dependence; to struggle — and succeed — in order to develop a sense of competence.**

The importance of well-developed human relationships and caring teachers is emphasized by a number of research studies on effective dropout prevention programs which are summarized by Wehlage & Rutter in their article, "Dropping Out: How Much Do Schools Contribute to the Problem?" in Teachers College Record, Columbia University, 1986:

The evidence from case studies of effective alternative programs for marginal students indicates that such students respond positively to an environment that combines a caring relationship and personalized teaching with a high degree of program structure characterized by clear, demanding, but attainable results.

Similarly, U.S. psychologist Roger C. Mills points out:

> **In national studies of dropout prevention pilot programs, several interesting results were found to be consistent across programs. Teachers who were able to reach high-risk youth were found to be consistently up-beat, empathic, and to consistently treat these youth with high levels of respect and regard. They were consistently supportive and confident of the child's ability to learn. They actively involved students in their own learning, and were not afraid to be creative in the classroom.**

And in a report of his massive study of American high schools, Ernest L. Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching sums up his findings regarding dropout prevention initiatives this way:

> **At the heart of every effort that appeared to be succeeding, we noticed that there was a close relationship between a student and a counselor or teacher — there was a mentor with high standards and clear goals, one who had gained the student's confidence and trust.**

It is suggested that the type of teaching behaviors called for in the research on effective schools is widely practiced in Alberta high schools and that administrators exercise leadership in monitoring and developing these skills. However, a school-based review of school climate in consultation with the counselling staff could lead to an improved focus on this question and renewed efforts to ensure optimum procedures for harnessing scarce resources. Radwanski summarizes the desired attitude on the part of teachers in this way:

A clearly conveyed sense of caring on the part of teachers, individualized help with problems of learning or coping, a purposeful and structured program, demanding and clearly-defined expectations — if those are the characteristics of programs that seem to help potential dropouts to stay in school, are they not indeed the characteristics of approaches that would help all students to obtain a high-quality and satisfying education?

Readers interested in further study are referred to the following articles for more in-depth information:

- "Dropout Prevention & Group Counselling: A Review of the Literature," High School Journal, Dec-Jan 1991.

- "How Schools Alienate Students At Risk: A Model for Examining Proximal Classroom Variables," Educational Psychologist, American Psychological Association, Spring 1990.

This brief section on counselling is not intended to be exhaustive. It does however highlight the need for effective procedures to be in place in preventing dropout. Taken in conjunction with the next two sections on Community, and Parent Partnerships, it can form a key ingredient of your school's STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives.

SEE ALSO IN MODULE FOUR:

PROJECT #5
PROJECT #22
PROJECT #30
PROJECT #38
PROJECT #43
PROJECT #48
PROJECT #60
PROJECT #63
PROJECT #65
PROJECT #70

F. Community Partnerships

We live in an age of specialization where professional services are segmented — each with its own educational credentials, each with its own career paths and each with its own administrative structure. In Alberta there are 26 government departments and a number of other boards and agencies together with a host of community organizations. Federal and municipal administrations also offer a range of services based on a departmentalized structure serving the community in its own specialized field. This structure is in marked contrast to the life of a teenager where everything seems to happen at once; where there are often multiple needs and conflicting priorities.

The task of co-ordinating the vast resources in our communities so that program effectiveness can be achieved and enhanced is a challenging one. In recent years there have been serious attempts to integrate services and avoid the problems associated with compartmentalization. This is the thrust of the case management approach outlined in the section on counselling and this is the thrust of some new thinking in addressing the needs of specific groups. The primary business of education is, of course, the teaching-learning process. However, when a child is hungry it cannot learn; when a child is sick it cannot learn; and when it hurts it cannot learn. Children, it would appear, do not conform to any organized pattern known to mankind and they often have multiple and changing needs which call for extreme flexibility in the nature and amount of help required.

The concept of partnerships in the community is not new but is taking on new significance when budgets do not keep pace with increasing needs and when the pace of social change often outruns our ability to cope. Interagency co-operation is now an accepted technique for delivering services. The concept of integrated services is accepted

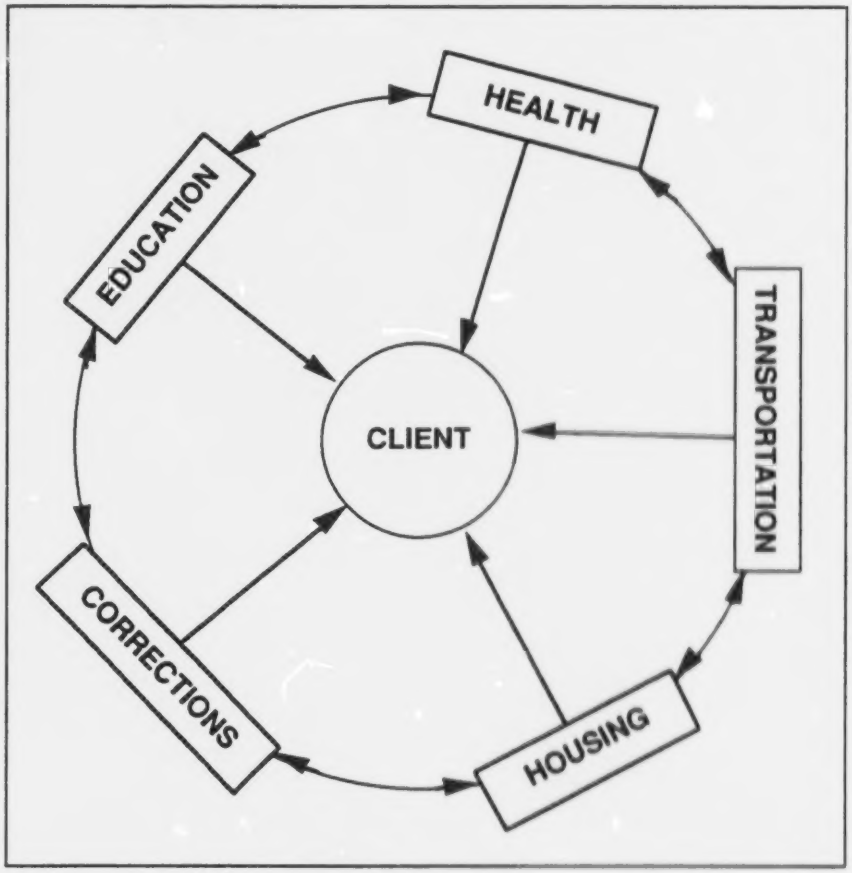
as a desirable, effective and efficient means of assisting at-risk youth.

Emerging elements of integrated services are:

- **A comprehensive approach to providing a spectrum of services instead of a "single-issue" approach. Normally a case-management style of operation is used where a team of specialists co-ordinates resources.**
- **The emphasis is on prevention rather than cure. Often it is only when a student has failed or is in crisis that services are provided.**
- **A child-centered approach puts the client first and organizes responses which focus on the child.**
- **Flexibility of administration is critical to success and there is at present often a lack of knowledge in schools of the full range of services available to youth.**

Guthrie & Guthrie in "Streamlining Interagency Collaboration for Youth At-Risk," Far West Laboratory for Educational Research & Development, 1990, maintain that schools today are becoming super-agencies with broad-ranging social service responsibilities. Schools are in danger of concentrating exclusively on academic improvement when most at-risk youth who drop out do so for a complex set of social and emotional reasons. They argue for collaboration among all agencies to develop a co-ordinated, case-managed, child-centered system to serve economically children and their families. This approach is diagrammed by Hodgkinson like this:

overhead 2.14



In Alberta the 88 local Further Education Councils represent a broad range of community agencies. Particularly in rural Alberta they may prove of great assistance in enhanced co-operation of services and a new emphasis on preventive programs. Since school boards are already major players in the further education movement the local councils may be the key element in a community-based strategy.

In addition to the more formal government structures, each community will have a variety of clubs and associations like the Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Lions, Kinsmen, etc. These clubs can be of great assistance in the activities outlined earlier in the section on Mentoring.

Module Four of this STAY IN—YOU WIN package also has a section on Business Partnerships in Chapter Five.

In Alberta, communities vary greatly in size, range of services available and in their cultural and social circumstances. A carefully planned strategy at the local level can raise awareness of the dropout problem, develop solutions that will work and harness the available resources to keeping youth in school.

SEE ALSO MODULE 4:

PROJECT #29
PROJECT #30
PROJECT #31
PROJECT #32
PROJECT #36
PROJECT #39
PROJECT #40

G. Parent Partnerships

Although this STAY IN—YOU WIN package is designed for implementation at the school level by educators, the final "consumers" of this program are students and their parents. Meaningful partnerships among students, parents and educators are becoming increasingly important in dropout prevention. Involving parents in the educational process can inform them of the consequences of dropping out, encourage them to provide a supportive home environment, and develop positive attitudes to paying the not inconsiderable costs of maintaining a student in high school. Given the information on the importance of family background which was introduced in Module One, the main priority for parent partnerships may well be educating them in the constructive roles they can play in student retention. Benefits of parent involvement have been

summarized by Novak & Dougherty in their book, Staying In: A Dropout Prevention Handbook:

1. **Parents are daily teaching their children and it benefits everyone when we support them in this endeavor,**
2. **A child's acceptance of school rests heavily on parental attitudes and interactions with school personnel,**
3. **Involving parents will make them feel as partners in education working toward a common goal,**
4. **Parent involvement can maximize consumer satisfaction in our educational system,**
5. **Parents have valuable life experiences that can be valuable resources for the total school community,**
6. **Teachers can more accurately assess children when they have more information about their child's strengths and weaknesses, and**
7. **Helping parents improve parenting skills can benefit school and society.**

Most administrators understand that effective parent support can do much to overcome adverse factors such as student ability, family socio-economic status and attitudes toward school. Staff training sessions are often conducted so that all teachers make building of strong partnerships a priority. Some research findings indicate that school-family relationships are easier to maintain in smaller communities as opposed to urban settings, and that parents of

elementary school children take more interest than parents of high school age children. At the high school level there is a special need to create effective home-school partnerships. The National Dropout Prevention Newsletter has inventoried some of the techniques that work:

overhead 2.15

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- home visits
- pre-program conferences/orientations
- telephone calls
- parent conferences
- open house
- serve on advisory committee
- testify before advisory committee
- volunteer tutors
- evaluate the program
- pot-luck/coffees
- approval for participation
- parent counselling
- brown bag lunches
- informal seminars
- family counselling
- weekly communications
- newsletters
- surveys
- parenting classes
- field trip supervisors
- teacher aides
- interview and recommend program personnel
- raise funds
- organize discussion groups
- mobilize community support
- staff informal drop-in centers
- help with special school events
- sponsor forum/lectures
- arts and crafts teachers
- parent study groups

Your school's Parent Council may be able to enhance the degree of involvement by parents and propose concrete suggestions for wider understanding and participation. Often, home tutoring and mentoring projects can involve parents as volunteers. In communities with a

high proportion of native students, Native Elders can provide a valuable source of advice and participate in home visitation programs for families in high need.

Educators seeking more information on building parent partnerships are referred to the special issue of the journal, Education and Urban Society, February 1987, which devoted the entire publication to nine articles on school-family relations.

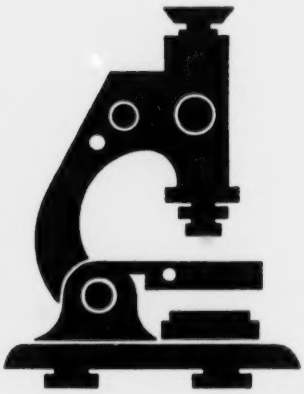
SEE ALSO MODULE FOUR:

PROJECT #12 PROJECT #20
PROJECT #19 PROJECT #25

H. Technology

The emphasis in this chapter has been on outlining a number of solutions to the dropout problem which emphasize improved and extended communication between and among people. Technology too can be used as a humanizing strategy. By freeing teachers from repetitive tasks; by streamlining administrative tasks and saving time, and by bringing a very real element of individualization to learning, technology is a major contributor to education. An Alberta Education study, Visions 2000: A Vision of Educational Technology in Alberta by the Year 2000 has this to say about the central role of technology in the educational process:

> Research has led us to a vision of a future where individual needs of each student can be met by our educational system in new and powerful ways. Study after study indicates the importance of an intelligent application of technology to the provision of learning opportunities for children.



Our vision of the year 2000 is one of rich and responsive environments for learning where each child may develop confidence and competence in using twenty-first century tools to deal with changing challenges that will call for new attitudes and skills to meet new personal and social realities.

The future is never as far away as we think it is, and there is a sense of urgency in the reports we have surveyed. This urgency stems from the increasing rate of change, the ever more complex nature of life in a technological society, and the failure of education to exploit the technologies that have such a major impact on virtually every other aspect of life. We see a future where students understand that technology is as much a consideration of ends as it is of means and whose level of understanding matches the sophistication of the technological tools at their disposal.

Imagination and creativity are uniquely human qualities that can be liberated by technological literacy and the new ways of thinking that technology makes possible. Only through being comfortable and familiar with technological change can we hope to understand it and use it to cope with the dramatic and often disturbing pace of change.

Technology can be a critical component of the teaching-learning process and offer new opportunities for effectiveness if we allow it to play a full and appropriate role in the educational enterprise. Research findings clearly indicate substantial savings of time and cost in achieving learning objectives. There is a very real potential for freeing students and teachers alike from a lock-step approach to learning that motivates neither. There is a very real potential for managing and delivering learning opportunity geared to the needs of each individual and of freeing teachers from some of the repetitive chores of imparting information and administering the system. In this sense, technology can be applied creatively to bring a new quality of human interaction to those crucial moments where humans perform incomparably well.

Our vision supports the fundamental spirit and intent of the Secondary Education Policy Statement which identified technology as an important component of the management and delivery of educational programs, both in the classroom and for distance education. Throughout our deliberations we have borne in mind the call for equitable access to learning opportunity, the greater individualization of learning, and the development of lifelong autonomous learning skills called for in the Policy Statement. There is no question that technology, intelligently applied, can enhance the quality of learning at fixed or reduced levels of funding, particularly in small or remote schools.

In implementing improved technological systems in Alberta's schools we believe that the limitations of technology and impediments to change must be analyzed with care. It is critical to effective implementation that we consider all the variables — humans, materials and machines — and plan for a future where all variables are managed to create the optimum use of all resources. In a sense, this is the true definition of any technology; it is especially important in education where it is imperative that we create environments that are humane.

Our assessment of past and present uses of technology in education leads us to great hope for future systems because there is sufficient maturity to plan for effective implementation. Alberta's teachers already make effective use of a relatively well-endowed inventory of equipment and materials. However, further realization of the potential of technology must be based on significant re-allocation of funds to the raw materials of learning. We do not hesitate in recommending this re-allocation because the evidence is compelling.

Research indicates that effective application of technology will:

- **Make education more productive.**
- **Make education more immediate and relevant.**
- **Make education more powerful.**
- **Give instruction a more scientific base.**

- **Make education more individual.**
- **Make education more accessible.**
- **Make education more responsive to special and individual needs.**
- **Make education more cost-effective and efficient.**

The 1987 Agency for Instructional Technology report cited in Module Four undertook a major study of technology in use specifically with at-risk students. Here are some key excerpts:

Technology has the unique ability to be non-judgmental about a student's "risk" factors.

— Middle School Principal

Role of Computers

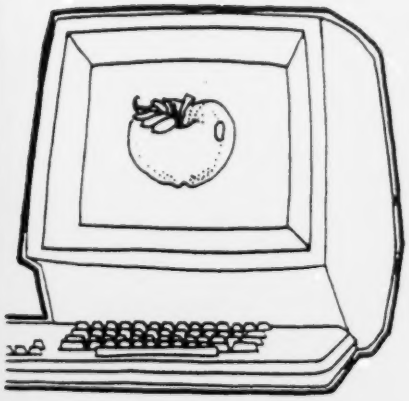
One of the fundamental ironies confronting us, when we examine how technology may serve the student at risk, is that the technological character of today's society is responsible, in large part, for putting students at risk in the first place. Pervasive technology has created a world in which the contribution of untrained muscle is virtually obsolete.

The same technology, however, which has created an economy so alien to many young people, can set them on the route to successful and productive lives. All too often these resources are least used where they are most needed. Here and there, however, imaginative and resourceful teachers and administrators have found ways to harness computer, television, video, telephone, and audio resources — products of the current revolution in communications — to an effort to reach students who have been resistant to traditional teaching.

- **Instruction**. Of the 360 forms that were returned, an overwhelming majority dealt with the use of computers for instructional purposes. Many were used in remedial math and reading programs, and for skill reinforcement in a variety of classrooms.

Computer-assisted instruction, like many other uses of technology for which the respondents claim success, permitted individualization of instruction. Certain phrases recurred in a great many survey responses: "They work on a personally tailored academic program." "Several different components... utilize computers to meet the students' individual remediation needs." "Individualized programs are sent out... to meet children's remedial needs." "Teachers meet the individual needs of the students with sequential, developmental learning programs." "Word processing abilities of the students vary, of course, depending on age, literacy level, and experience with word processing. However, the teachers involved are accustomed to personalizing the instruction so that all students participate and make progress."

Many teachers praise word processing programs for the way in which they reinforce a variety of language arts skills and simultaneously motivate students and help them take pride in their work. One respondent reported, "The use of word processing software has greatly reduced the frustration of our lower-ability students in the preparation of neat copy and the ease with which they can edit their original drafts." Another respondent wrote, "Because of the ease of using word processing, students tended to write more often and to do revisions more readily. Because of the quality of their work, students' self-esteem was raised and writing proficiency increased."



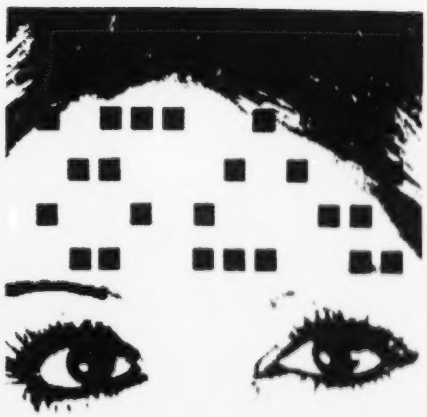
Respondents found that appropriate software actually increased students' reading abilities. A computer specialist and director of bilingual/bicultural education reported that when "software packages [are] measured against growth... the software packages that appear to make the significant differences are those that deal with imaginative reading and decision-making."

Students are introduced to computer software in a variety of fields such as retail sales, small business management, accounting, word processing, medical transcription, and graphics. In a program beginning next year in California,

graphics. In a program beginning next year in California, students will use computers to achieve "basic skills and career development on a continuum from small business awareness to entrepreneurship."

- **Diagnosis**. Software has been combined with programs that "diagnose" a student's competencies and level of achievement, issue "prescriptions" for remediation, provide programs of instruction and drill, and monitor a student's progress. Most educators find that intensive use of such programs with low-ability or disaffected students and with potential and actual dropouts have been very effective in overcoming a variety of academic deficiencies.

- **Special Education.** Other respondents reported that the multisensory, multimodality demands of the computer were highly effective with students in a variety of learning disability and special education classes. A guidance counselor in Massachusetts wrote, "Electronic technology... plays an integral role in a special education program because of its multisensory component that most special ed students need in order to achieve success."



If we underestimate the abilities of these students, denying them the challenge of critical and analytical thinking and writing, then we will get less from them than they are capable of doing.

— New York Special Needs Co-ordinator

Use of computers also enhances the self-esteem of these students. Many respondents reported that the opportunity to participate in a program using "high tech" effectively removed any stigma attached to remedial classes. A Canadian special education co-ordinator wrote, "A lot of students are frustrated with print, and a technological vehicle kindles their desire to learn."

- **Record Keeping**. Computers are especially well-geared to record-keeping chores, freeing time of teachers and administrators to deal directly with the students. A respondent in Missouri writes, "Paperwork is burying teachers and administrators in Special Education."

  A district in Colorado has developed a computer system called EIPED (Early Identification of Potential Educational Discontinuers) "which will be capable of identifying students from grades K-12 who have a high likelihood of discontinuing school and tracking prevention intervention strategies implemented in the schools to address individual student needs." Seven characteristics — sex, ethnicity, family status, achievement, attendance, suspension, mobility — are tracked and weighted on the basis of the "Fred Holmens Student Analysis System."

  In Florida, a school district's guidance program uses the student Case Management System "to keep an ongoing record of some of the interventions and strategies used with students at risk." In addition, each secondary student has a computerized Career Course Plan (CCP) on file, and the TRACE (Transfer Student Information and Credit Evaluation System) program is also used.

  A guidance counsellor in Quebec described a project using a specially designed questionnaire with grades 8 and 10. Results are fed into a computer and the results help identify potential dropouts.

Impact of Computers

In the South, a study involving all reading students at a junior high school demonstrated a greater gain in achievement among those using computers in their reading classes compared with those who did not.

Many of our students find it easier to relate to machines than to people.

— Principal, Continuation High School

Several respondents suggested reasons for the computer's success with chronic underachievers and students at risk. A newspaper reported about a program in a Florida city to help dropouts master basic academic skills. According to the article, the lab director attributed the program's success to "positive reinforcement." "Students get the feedback from doing well at levels they are capable of attaining instead of being asked to perform beyond their ability." Programs are tailor-made to address specific problems each student is having in English, reading, or mathematics.

A director of special projects reported that a computer lab was installed in a Southern high school to help low-functioning students "who need additional time and instruction in order to perform at a level necessary to pass a test of basic skills.... Evidence substantiates the fact that students who use the computer with appropriate mathematics software show significant gains in test scores."

Role of Video

Television adds a visual and auditory dimension to a lesson that may be essential for a student with limited verbal abilities. "Television transmits information even when the student's language skills are limited. Television can dissect, analyze, and demonstrate concepts and project them into various action scenarios. A single video scene can provide the equivalent of many pages of text. Information about an event can be shown to students as the event occurs."

Other advantages of video instruction include the promotion of a "more global perspective"; the introduction of new environments; an increase of motivation, interest, and involvement; the enhancement of abilities to analyze, evaluate, and think critically; the compression of time and distance; the immediacy of current and past events; the demonstration of cause and effect; the illustration of skills, functions, and

relationships; and the presentation of microscopic and macroscopic images.

A high school teacher of students who are learning disabled and who showed behavior and attitude problems discovered similar advantages to video reinforcement of the curriculum. From Massachusetts she wrote, "Curriculum in social studies and English is greatly enhanced by the use of a VCR in the classroom. Geography, cultures, time and space concepts are more easily perceived using the visual presentation. Concepts are more easily grasped. The language of books and short stories is given clearer meaning with the use of the VCR. It reinforces other learning."

Video is commonly reported for use in guidance and counselling situations, for introduction and reinforcement of vocational skills, and occasionally to supplement instruction. A Maryland district uses videocassettes for teen pregnancy prevention, drug education, AIDS prevention, and for encouraging minorities to enter careers in science and engineering.

Districts with large numbers of students deficient in English language skills apparently are drawing on a variety of technological resources to help them. High schools in a Virginia city use VHS cassettes regularly, writes a respondent. A series called Speak for Yourself, she writes, "lends itself to student videotapes, and teachers use video cameras to introduce students to situations they are likely to encounter in their new environments."

A Texas school district has its own production studio transmitting through a cable network to all elementary classrooms. A district in California draws on ITV and videocassettes to "provide preview and/or background information in literature, social studies, science," and the respondent reports that these "especially help students with an ethnic, economic, or cultural disadvantage — or who possess limited proficiency in English."

Students at risk, whether or not they are in vocational programs, usually need extensive supportive counselling in areas ranging

from study skills, money management, and job responsibilities to substance abuse, sex education, and parenting. In nearly all the programs reported, video programs play an important role. A Canadian respondent writes, "We utilize video cameras, VCRs, TV, cassette tape players, cameras, slides, and 16mm films to enhance the teaching/learning experience for our students. More specifically, these programs would relate to social skills development, understanding your own and others' thoughts and behavior, values clarification, family living skills, etc."

Computers and Video in Career Counselling

Computers and video programs are widely used for career counselling. Several respondents in the United States and Canada reported using "Choices" and "Career Search" software. Computers are used to help students assess their vocational choices and for resume preparation. Video programs dramatize interview techniques and introduce students to a variety of career possibilities. Mock interviews are videotaped.

Other Technologies

Several unusual and innovative programs make use of technology other than computers and video programming. A teleconferencing system has been established in Alaska to link isolated district schools with each other and with experts in a variety of fields. In Chicago, telephone dialers are used to "inform parents of absenteeism, cutting, and other attendance problems. Some systems are used to arouse students with a history of tardiness." "Homework Hotline" or "Dial a Teacher" programs have been established in several communities. Sometimes these are linked to televised help sessions.

Conclusion

Most teachers and administrators who responded to the survey praised the effects of the technology they were describing. The teacher who wrote, "The computer is the most successful teaching method I have used in 20 years of teaching!" is not atypical. Perhaps the reason that technology is such a natural

resource for dealing with students at risk was best stated by the middle school principal from Arizona who wrote, "The point should be made that the factors that put students 'at risk' are frequently beyond their control. Technology has the unique ability to be non-judgmental about a student's 'risk' factors. The technology will fulfill its potential only if the policies and programs dictating its use optimize contact and control by the students. This will allow the students an area in their lives where they are in control and successful. That will increase their self-esteem and in turn lessen the control of the 'risk' factors in their lives.

Module Four contains 25 case studies of Technology being used in dropout prevention programs in Canada and the United States. In planning for your STAY IN—YOU WIN initiatives, you might consider if some of these applications are relevant to your situation. Unquestionably the technologies can be used to develop complementary approaches to learning for those in difficulty with academic subjects. By using instructional packages for independent study or use in peer group tutoring under the supervision of a teacher, technology can enhance self-esteem and play a major role in preventing high school dropout.

6. DROPPING BACK

A brief note on dropping back concludes this module. A drop-back is a student who returns to school after an extended absence caused by once dropping out. Statistics on dropping back are difficult to maintain because often families move, and students sometimes take a semester off to save money through working or for other personal reasons.

Radwanski reports that fewer than half of all dropouts generally return to school and the harsh reality is that few of them end up graduating with a high school diploma. The Decima study reported that only 18% of dropouts subsequently completed their high school education. The Goldfarb study, again in Ontario, reported a mere 14% of dropouts who ended up with a high school diploma. It may be that some dropouts obtain a high school diploma later in life through attendance at Alberta Vocational Centres or other institutions; however, there can be no question that dropping back is very seldom successful.

In Ohio several initiatives have been established to combat the dropout problem. One such initiative involves a qualified counsellor using the telephone to make a "care-call" to students who have left school. By contacting either the student or a parent, every effort is made to persuade the student to return. Once the student returns he is placed in a special dropout re-entry program which is designed to avoid a feeling of failure that is almost always a reason for dropping out in the first place. The dropout re-entry program concentrates on intensive individual and group counselling, exploring the relationship between freedom and responsibility and a special study skills component. The dropout re-entry program also has the student draw

up a contract for academic and personal goals and take special courses in assertiveness and decision-making if these are required. The program involves the student's regular school counsellor in arranging for individualized career, course selection and educational counselling. This specialized approach recognizes that a "drop-back" needs an extra measure of help specifically designed to avoid the difficulties that led to dropping out. Evaluations of the project indicate a 50% reduction in the rate of second withdrawals from school.

For some students who re-enter school after dropping out, a period of academic catching up may be advisable. This can be achieved through one-on-one tutoring by a teacher, adult mentor or even a senior student. Alternatively, individualized instruction through technological or human means, correspondence courses or summer schools can be used to maintain and improve the student's academic standing. On occasion, some students may be better served by counselling them to a more adult environment in the post-secondary system where stigma may be minimized.

SEE ALSO MODULE FOUR:

PROJECT #6
PROJECT #44
PROJECT #47
PROJECT #58
PROJECT #73

STAY IN — YOU WIN